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Vol. XII

APRIL 1986

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EDITOR : K. S. MAHADEVAN

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A Spectrum of Perspectives on Sri Tyagaraja

BY

Dr. WILLIAM J. JACKSON

Dept. of Religious Studies, Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana (USA)

PART THREE*

Dr. R. KRISHNASWAMY: TYĀGARĀJA AS PERSONAL GOD AND TEACHER OF MORALS

Dr. R. Krishnaswamy is the president of the Sadguru Sangita Samajam Madras, and a longtime devotee of Tyāgarāja. A medical man before blindness struck, he is also a world traveller and an eloquent speaker in English as well as Tamil.²⁸

Dr. R. Krishnaswamy is well known for his enthusiastic promotion of Tyāgarāja scholarship and performances. Asked about the depiction of Tyāgarāja in the legendary stories of the saint's life, he said that the commentators always try to find many more meanings in the texts of songs than the authors intended to write. He said this may have good effects - such as stimulating thinking and generating new ideas, but that it also may have negative effects, developing insupportable fancies. For the first sixty or seventy years after the saint's death, these stories were not circulated, he said. But since that time the legend has sprouted up like so much ivy obliterating the original contours of the building. Such an excess of legend has grown up around the saint's life - interpretations, miracle stories, anecdotes, - that people no

longer know what is true. Every time one hears a different *harikathā* (musical discourse) performer, fresh episodes have been added to the life by the performer's imagination, and one more song has been twisted to fit into the context he has invented.

Dr. Krishnaswamy's friend, T. S. Parthasarathy, the musicologist, who was also present, agreed, and added that no one is supposed to question the authenticity of the stories: "To do so is considered blasphemous." He noted that Professor P. Sambamoorthy assiduously gathered much information about Tyāgarāja's life, but that he had a personal weakness for miracle stories, and felt it would be a breach of faith to check on their veracity.²⁹

Yet, Dr. Krishnaswamy concluded that a person such as himself approached Tyāgarāja with faith, even though he was aware that a scholar in the interest of intellectual analysis must shed the traditional sentiment and emotion that tend to color the original facts. As is the case with many other well-educated South Indians of this century, Dr. Krishnaswamy's appreciation of Tyāgarāja's greatness does not rest upon miracle stories. He characterized his understanding of Tyāgarāja in the following way:

*Parts I and II appeared in the issues of Oct. 85 and Jan. 86

To T. S. Parthasarathy, Tyāgarāja is just another composer. To me, he is God. It is a totally different path. The only deity to whom I pray is Tyāgarāja, because my conception of what one man should do for his own happiness in this world has developed through listening to Tyāgarāja. Everyone has told me of the world beyond, but Tyāgarāja has taught me about the here and now, and has told us that morals are far more important than rituals and religious obsequies. He emphasized that it's not what you say that matters, it's what you do... Many people before him said these things, but the way he said them, the proverbs he has chosen, the similes he has brought to bear to emphasize his point, these are always artful and fascinating. I've often thought, here is something simple, that elevates one to a place where unhappiness disappears. Again and again he takes us to a plane of happiness.³⁰

This upliftment is the saint's great service, according to Dr. Krishnaswamy, who sees Tyāgarāja as one who reminds people, through song, of important truths which go straight to the heart. And this gift of Tyāgarāja is more important to Dr. Krishnaswamy, he said, than analytical dissection. "The direct experience, the taste of sugar on the tongue is sweet, and this is greater than three full pages of text on which to cogitate." Yet it should be noted that Dr. Krishnaswamy is by no means anti-intellectual; like Śrī Narasimhan, he simply values direct experience, wisdom, and inner harmony.

When asked if the Tyāgarāja whom he thus worships has any supernatural influence

on his life, i.e., if the saint's presence is felt aside from the music and the words of the songs, Dr. Krishnaswamy replied in the negative, stating that it is only through the words and music that the experience and message are communicated. Even the reading of the "sheer poetry" of the texts without the music is a satisfying practice for Dr. Krishnaswamy. "There are so many of his songs I have never heard sung; but I read them in a book, every day we read three or four *kṛitis* and just sit for several minutes pondering on them... Some are *nāmāvalis*, (songs of divine names)." Through such songs, whether read alone or sung *en masse*, Dr. R. Krishnaswamy believes Tyāgarāja cultivates spirituality in people, and teaches morals. Yet, Krishnaswamy does not call Tyāgarāja merely his *guru*, but reveres him as his personal God, a religious guide who embodies divine reality. As T.S. Parthasarathy characterizes the relationship, "R. K. considers Tyāgarāja as God himself who walked the earth in human form."³¹

PROFESSOR NARAYANA RAO : TYĀGARĀJA AS ARCHITECTONIC MASTER POET

Professor Narayana Rao is the Head of the South Asian Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin, where he has taught Telugu for nearly ten years.³² To illustrate the kind of lyricist Tyāgarāja is, Narayana Rao described the typical pattern of the Tyāgarāja song. The *pallavi* (refrain; literally, the "sprout" or that which is to be elaborated) is the song's first line, which is repeated often throughout the song. The *anupallavi* (sub-refrain), the second line, often completes the first line and makes an entire sentence when joined to it.

In some cases one could stop at the end of a line and still retain an entire idea. But more often the *anupallavi* ends with an adjective or a fragment of a word which is completed only by the repetition of the *pallavi*. Thus, the entirety, the combination of the two parts, again becomes a sentence.³³ This pattern holds true throughout most songs: the *caranams* ("feet" or stanzas) are also completed by the return of the first line. In this chain effect, expressions are completed by a return to the starting point which extends the length and meaning of the sentence. Thus, one is forming concentric circles with all this purposeful repetition, creating a spiral effect. The singer, by properly singing the song, is able to insulate the atmosphere, as it were, with a complete dome of sound and meaning, a perfect spiralling structure.

Professor Rao feels there is a "tremendous architectural beauty in Tyāgarāja's compositions," and a subtlety of design. He notes, for example, the way Tyāgarāja paints the options he presents to the listener in *Nidhi cāla sukhamā*:³⁴ richer words and sounds are used to name the preferred alternative. For example, the sweetness of Rāma's name is more flavorful (i.e., the name of God is more enjoyable) than the milk and curd mentioned in the lyrics, simply in the appeal of the language used. In his lyrics, with simple beauty and dynamic surprises, Tyāgarāja proves himself a highly skilled creative craftsman.

Professor Rao notes too that as a poet Tyāgarāja frequently uses engaging images which at some level are quite sensuous, though the ideas suggested are often philosophical. This practice makes for a curious dynamism and depth. Thus,

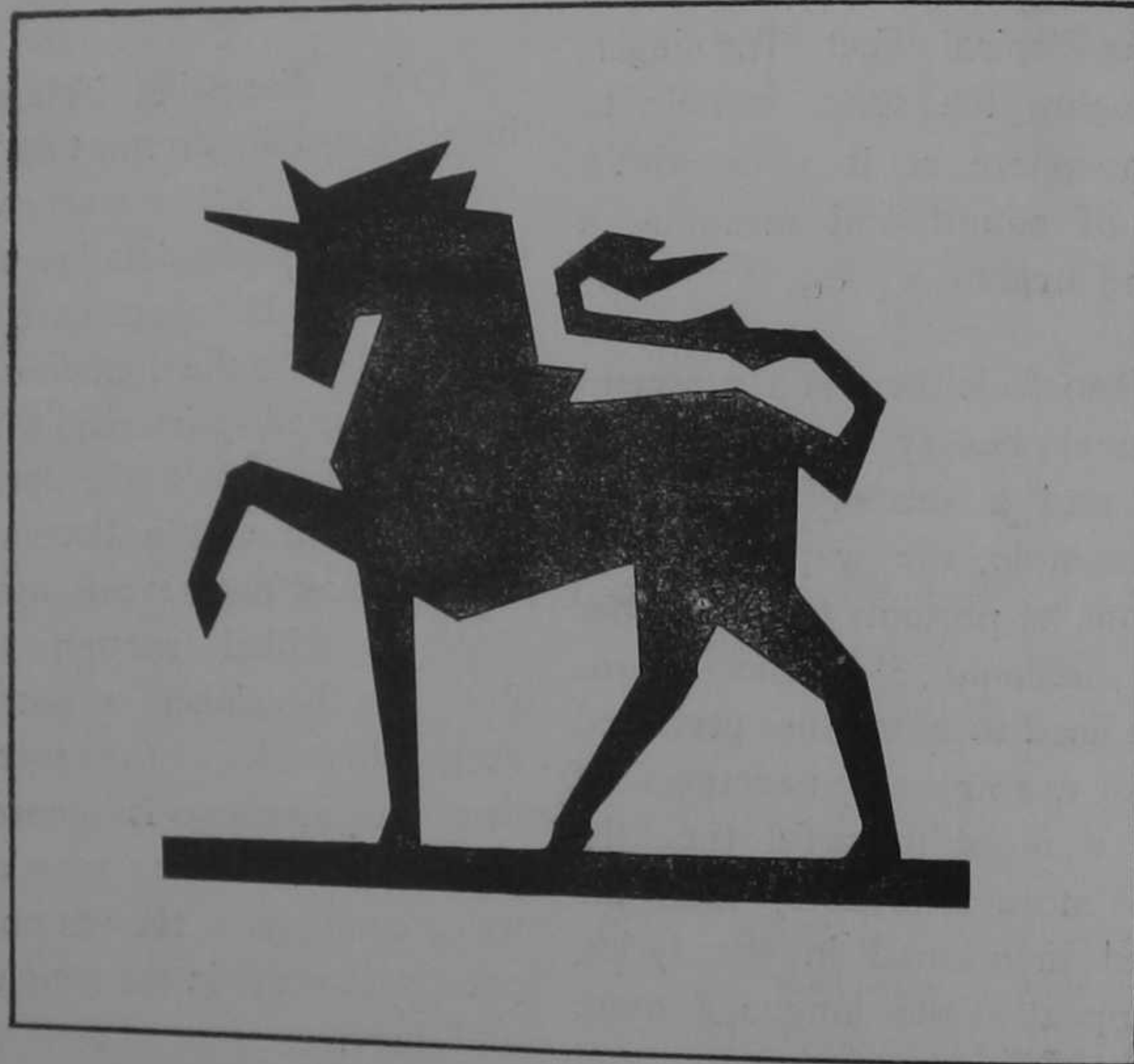
characteristically, the Tyāgarāja song is not one in which the text is a mere pretext used to carry a heavy load of complex music. Both text and music are complex. The Tyāgarāja song is a highly textured, very complex art form with many layers and elements exquisitely organized. Thus, ideally, the performance of the music does justice to the complex gestalt of ideas and language in the song. Ideally the singers should be aware of the depth of meanings embedded in the songs, but often musicians do not have sufficient understanding, or they underestimate *bhakti* poets, Rao contends.

Critics discussing Telugu poetry and literature usually do not take a serious look into Tyāgarāja's song texts as poetry. They take him for granted as just another *bhakti* song writer. His songs have fallen almost exclusively into the domain of people who are concerned primarily with the music. Instead of reading the lyrics, they only listen to them, and in listening the textual density may not reveal itself, unless the singer is skilled enough to suggest it. But often the singer is not aware of the deeper dimensions of the text, and thus the density of meanings is ignored. Nevertheless, Tyāgarāja was as great a lyricist as he was a composer. He was one of the great poets who wrote in the temple *pada* dialect of Telugu.

S. PARTHASARATHY : TYĀGARĀJA AS A MODERN SAINT ABLE TO DRAW RĀMA'S ATTENTION

S. Parthasarathy, now retired and living in Madras, learned Tyāgarāja songs from Dr. Srinivasa Raghavan, known affectionately as Dr. Seema, a well known

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Tyāgarāja-enthusiast with ties to an original disciple of the saint.³⁶

Sri Parthasarathy, interested in the processes involved in the composition of devotional songs, praises Tyāgarāja's genius for illumining various moods. He explains that the *bhakta* (devotee) experiences several moods: he or she fervently practices, yearns, and meditates expectantly. When he or she does not get the desired vision of the beloved, there is disappointment and depression. The devotee then bursts into a song which expresses despair and bewilderment. Then the devotee is in an introspective mood, wondering what the problem is, feeling his or her own imperfection and wondering what purpose is served by lamenting the situation, confessing that the defect is within, and that no blame can be attached to the Lord. Then, while waiting patiently, the devotee suddenly sees a divine light and is ecstatic. But when the vision does not last, the devotee becomes depressed again. These are typical *bhakti* shifts of feeling, Parthasarathy says. Tyāgarāja could express all of these moods, sometimes using the same *rāga*: at other times he expressed one mood with various *rāgas*.

Another aspect of Tyāgarāja's compositions which S. Parthasarathy finds interesting is the manner in which the saint utilized familiar expressions in his lyrics. He cites the example of the saying about a man who began making a Ganapati (the elephant-headed god) but finished by producing a monkey -- a homely maxim about grand intentions gone awry. He also cited the proverbs which ask, "Having butter in your hand, why weep for ghee (clarified butter)?" and "If there is a blister

on your hand, does one need a mirror to see it?" With such proverbs Tyāgarāja expressed important concepts such as grace and the self-evidence of spiritual experience.³⁶

S. Parthasarathy notes that some people say Tyāgarāja was Vālmīki reborn, while others say that he was Nārada. In one of Tyāgarāja's songs the composer speaks of himself as a kind of messenger of God, come to proclaim to people the musical path to *mokṣa* (liberation). No other composer "divined and described the great force of music" as a spiritual discipline so well. Tyāgarāja wrote over fifteen songs on this subject. In one of the songs Tyāgarāja declared, "I have finished the work with which you entrusted me, and I now wait for your grace". This song must have been sung at the end of Tyāgarāja's life, and it shows that he was conscious of a sense of mission. He was a unique force for religious culture in South India.

While Śrī Parthasarathy believes that some legends about Tyāgarāja, such as the protection of the saint from thieves by Rāma and Lakṣmana, may be true, certain other anecdotes are probably untrue, and reduce Tyāgarāja to the mundane level.³⁷

According to S. Parthasarathy, the best way to think of Tyāgarāja is as a spiritual musical composer who offered so much wonderful music to Rāma that Rāma was compelled to obey him. By his music he could entice the Lord, and commune with him. When his music has such power, Śrī Parthasarathy believes, we can best conceive of him and appreciate him as a great composer whose spontaneously-created music was intended as praise fo

Rāma; his songs were the outpourings of a mood-moved devotee. "He just sang. And Rāma listened."

T. SANKARAN: TYĀGARĀJA AS COMPOSER-SAINT TRANSCENDING MANY BOUNDARIES

T. Sankaran is a musicologist, manager of the Tamil Isai Sangam, a Tamil music academy and *sabhā* (society), and is the grandson of Veena Dhanammal, one of the most highly regarded musicians of the century.³⁸ Viewing Tyāgarāja in an historical context, T. Sankaran notes that World War II, Indian Independence, and the linguistic division of India brought many changes and readjustments. For example, one of the chief planks of the annual Tyāgarāja *ārādhana* festival was originally the mass feeding of *brāhmins*. War-time rationing cut this short, and with the winning of Independence and the consequent democratization of society, the feeding became "cosmopolitan," i.e. multicasite. With the raising of linguistic consciousness, the dominance of Telugu lyrics in song and dance performances in Tamil Nadu was resented, and the Dravidian movement increased affection for the Tamil language. Yet, T. Sankaran notes that "Governments may come and go, but Tyāgarāja goes on for ever." He also notes that Tyāgarāja's empire has now spread to countries other than India. Thus Tyāgarāja is a state-and nation-transcending figure.

T. Sankaran believes that much gratitude is owed to Tyāgarāja for extending and promoting the greatness of Tamil music, and that the Tamil people affectionately feel indebted to him. Tyāgarāja never received any "royalty" for the public performance of his songs, and no one can

claim payment on his behalf; so, it is a gift, a legacy free and accessible to all. The music of Tyāgarāja "has simplicity as a shining point. Everyone sings it for its aesthetic appeal and for its moral values."

Noting that Tyāgarāja is very popular as a composer at this time, T. Sankaran points to the way in which the saint's music has "even invaded the dance repertoire". Tyāgarāja is a "money-spinner" in the modern world, because of his popularity and the demand it creates; every linguistic area, including those in North India, attempts to make capital out of Tyāgarāja's appeal. The law of supply and demand operates, and articles, books, records, pictures, picture books, films, and other media programs are produced by both the learned and the business-minded. At the present time, the "Wireless Service" (e.g., All India Radio) is a great modern patron of music, and Tyāgarāja's songs enjoy a wide patronage through it. Tyāgarāja is the favored composer of classical South Indian music in the modern age.

Provincial attitudes and old limitations do not hold true for the present status of Tyāgarāja. Tyāgarāja was a *brāhman* with Sanskrit learning, yet even those who agitate to promote their own respective mother tongues do not eschew or condemn Tyāgarāja, Śrī Sankaran asserts. For example, no proponent of Tamil has led a crusade against Tyāgarāja, though he may clamor for Tamil in all spheres, including music.³⁹ Non-Hindus, e.g., the late John Higgins of the United States, and Jesudas, a Christian from Kerala, sang Tyāgarāja songs and are quite popular. The social restrictions prohibiting women (other than those of the traditional professional musi-

cian class) to make music and to dance are no longer valid. The dance and the *nāgasvaram*-playing professions are presently in the hands of performers who would not defy or neglect Tyāgarāja. Śrī Sankaran notes that twenty-five years ago a *brāhman* playing *nāgasvaram* would have been unthinkable. Today, "even sensitive young girls" play that instrument. With all the changes in the present century, he notes, the fortunes of Tyāgarāja have only risen, and his religious vitality has increased.

Śrī Sankaran finds it significant that Bangalore Nagaratnammal, a non-*brāhman* courtesan whose mother tongue was Kannada, built a shrine for Tyāgarāja, a Telugu *brāhman* in Tamil Nadu, in an exemplary transcendence of regional boundaries.

On the personal level, T. Sankaran is a devotee of Tyāgarāja, revering him as his guru, receiving from his songs religious inspiration⁴⁰.

S. V. PARTHASARATHY: TYĀGARĀJA AS UNCONSCIOUS MUSICAL GRAMMARIAN, BHAKTA COMPOSER

S. V. Parthasarathy is a musician and *viṇā* teacher presently living in Tiruchirappalli. In 1981 he won the Music Academy prize and has been awarded many other musical honors⁴¹.

It is S. V. Parthasarathy's view that the criticism often leveled at singers—that they do not know Telugu well enough and are "murdering" Tyāgarāja's songs—is only partly valid. He believes that the clarity of the meaning of a song is important, even though the masses in Tamil Nadu largely appreciate the melody rather than

the words. While clarity is important, he points out, there is a difference between poetry and prose, and one should remember that poetry cannot be sung in a prose order though the words might be more understandable that way. Tyāgarāja composed all of his pieces in a particular time, a particular rhythm. If one removes this element, then the words are prose. The *rūpaka tāḷa* is a rhythmic unit of six beats: 1, 2, 3 1, 2, 3 with the stress on the 3. Thus, singing a song in this *tāḷa*, e.g., *Sogasugā*,⁴² one will stress syllables which would not be stressed in a prose recital. Though he did not compose *kṛitis* in a Telugu verse meter, Tyāgarāja the *bhakta* was also Tyāgarāja the music grammarian, when he composed; at some level he worked out his ideas within the strict forms of classical music. He worked strictly within set disciplines.

As for Tyāgarāja's mode of composition, S. T. Parthasarathy believes it is important to consider the part played by the saint's disciples in recording the songs. For example, when Tyāgarāja went singing in the streets in the morning, engaged in the practice of *uñchavṛtti*, as is the traditional duty of *brāhmins*, he would sing extemporaneously, it is said. Tyāgarāja's *śiṣyas* (disciples) would hear the song, and one of them would transcribe the note, another would write out the text of the song, and the disciples would put their notes together and practise the song. Tyāgarāja did not know what he had sung because a person in the depths of ecstasy is not aware of what he does. Though trained as a musician, Tyāgarāja was a saint. Having been trained as a musician, and having a great musical instinct, he

could not sing a song incorrectly, even if he was not specifically concerned with the grammar—the rules were second nature to him.

S. V. Parthasarathy believes that people elaborate episodes on the lives of the great, including Tyāgarāja, out of the idea that they are doing service to the great person whom they respect and glorify. A song such as “Which is better?” (*Nidhi cāla sukhamā*⁴³) is a song generally in praise of worship and meditation. In *harikathā* performances this song is said to be a direct reply to a king’s messenger—it is a

convenient way to build up a dramatic story for the *harikathā* performer, who is not concerned with factual history. These performers similarly use various songs to depict various episodes in the saint’s life. If one really knows the music and the words, it is not necessary to link the songs to dramatic events in Tyāgarāja’s life, in order to get the most out of them.

S. V. Parthasarathy enjoyed illustrating his points by playing on his *vinā*, and spoke of the inebriating effect of Tyāgarāja’s music, even upon reasonable men. “When I talk about Tyāgarāja, I become a mad man” he laughed.⁴⁴

NOTES

²⁸Based on an interview with Dr. Krishnaswamy, Madras, Feb. 28, 1981. Final T. S. Parthasarathy quote from personal correspondence, dated April 25, 1983, Madras.

²⁹T. S. Parthasarathy, before the annual Akhaṇḍa Bhajan in Purasawākkam, Feb. 28, 1981.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Based on an interview with Prof. Narayana Rao. Madison, Wisconsin, July 26, 1980. See also Prof. Indira Viswanathan Peterson, “The *kṛti* as an integrative cultural form.....”

³³From a large sampling of Tyāgarāja’s songs I have come to the conclusion that while the parts of the lyrics are subtly interdependent, the *pallavi* is most often an independent statement, while the *anupallavi* often becomes a complete sentence when the *pallavi* is sung after it.

⁴⁴*Nidhi cāla sukhamā*, SHT p. 3.

³⁵Based [on an interview with Mr. Parthasarathy, Madras, April 5, 1981, and talks with him during that year. S. Parthasarathy’s teacher, Dr. Srinivasa Raghavan, was taught by a disciple of his paternal uncle, Tillaisthānam Rama Ayyangar, a direct disciple of Tyāgarāja. A medical doctor who enthusiastically spread Tyāgarāja’s music in Madras, (and, as P. Sambamoorthy said, “lit the lamp of Bhakti in many a heart,”) Srinivasa Raghavan considered Tyāgarāja’s music as his inheritance—a “family treasure.” He fondly recalled his uncle, Rama Ayyangar, who had made a cradle for him when he was born. Rama Ayyangar is remembered by the Tillaisthānam disciples as the third greatest disciple of Tyāgarāja; he was known for his excellent voice, and tradition has it that Tyāgarāja used to say, “Rāmo, you must sing, and then my Rāma will certainly listen!”

Dr. Raghavan, also known affectionately as “Dr. Seema” is recalled by many as a very dedicated man, who practiced medicine by day and music by night. He and his wife always celebrated the Bahula Pañcami day (the fifth day after the full moon) each month, Tyāgarāja’s day of passing; they would sing before a large portrait of the saint for several hours. For twelve years S. Parthasarathy and his wife joined them in this practice.

³⁶*Evaritō nēdelpudu*, SHT, p. 255. See also GC II, p. 284. These proverbs and familiar expressions are folk wisdom often found in vernacular *bhakti* poetry.

³⁷S. Parthasarathy cited a supposed incident as an example: according to this story a famous puppet show performer who was a good singer wanted to get Tyāgarāja’s blessings. Tyāgarāja was so conservative that to attend any entertainment of this kind would have seemed an unworthy distraction from his Rāma worship, S. Parthasarathy believes. But the performer, Ramanatha Ayyar, asked a pupil of Tyāgarāja’s to persuade the master to attend the show. Tyāgarāja is said to have yielded and reluctantly and gone incognito. The man sang a song in *Ānandabhairavi rāga*, Tyāgarāja is supposed to have applauded, saying “Sābāsh” - “Bravo” or “Wonderful.” The man, so the story goes, asked Tyāgarāja for his blessing and a boon. The boon was that the saint would never compose in *Ānandabhairavi rāga*, so that in the future when people asked why Tyāgarāja had neglected *Ānandabhairavi rāga*, Ramanatha Ayyar would be recalled, giving him a kind of contingent immortality.

S. Parthasarathy feels that stories like this are “the poorest way we can think of Tyāgarāja.” Instead, he feels people should recall that Tyāgarāja did not compose music by first consciously deciding on a *rāga* and *tāla*, but by following his inspiration, being lost in his deep feelings. Also, it is interesting to note that Tyāgarāja did compose a good number of pieces in *Ritigaula rāga*, which is a close kin to *Ānandabhairavi rāga*.

³⁸Based on interviews in Madras, 1980-81-82, and in correspondence, February, 1983.

³⁹In Jan 1982 I heard loudspeakers blaring Tamil songs in deliberate competition with the nearby Tyāgarāja *ārādhana* celebration in Tiruvaivāru. Presumably this was an example of a "Pure Tamil" or "Tamil Separatist" movement agitating for Tamil lyrics in Tamil Nadu.

⁴⁰T. Sankaran has written a booklet in Tamil on Bangalore Nagaratnammal, as has T.S. Parthasarathy. See Bibliography.

⁴¹Based on an interview in Tiruchirāpalli, Jan. 1981.

⁴²*Sogasugā*, SHT pp. 90-91.

⁴³*Nidhi cāla sukhamā*, SHT pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴Interview, Tiruchirāpalli, Jan. 1981.

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|--|-----|--|
| 1. Place of its Publication | ... | Plot 292, Jayshankar Yagnik Marg, Bombay-400 022. |
| 2. Periodicity of its Publication | ... | Quarterly. |
| 3. Printer's & Publisher's Name | ... | R. V. Murthy. |
| Nationality | ... | Indian. |
| Address | ... | Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha. Bombay-400 022. |
| 4. Editor's Name | ... | K. S. Mahadevan. |
| Nationality | ... | Indian. |
| Address | ... | Plot 30 Krishnapuri
Raja Annamalaipuram, Madras-600 028. |
| 5. Name and address of individuals who own the newspaper and partner shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital. | ... | Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, Plot 292, Jayashankar Yajnik Marg, Bombay-400 022. |

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The Thyagaraja Aradhana, Tiruvaivāru

BY
SUBBUDU

(This is merely an announcement and to be precise, contains only extracts from a Speech delivered by Shri Vaidyanathan, Secretary General of the Thyagaraja Aradhana Committee on the Bahula Panchami day recently.)

My blood brothers! On this solemn occasion I want to place before you a scheme which I have conceived and nurtured for long years to make the Thyagaraja Aradhana Festival an economically viable affair. You are all aware that every year we have to struggle for funds to manage the circus and year after year all the musicians have started playing truant by laying down impossible conditions for their participation. Every one wants to be featured in the National Programme at peak time and you will appreciate how impossible it is to please every one. They cannot sing the Pancha Rathna kritis in unison and now-a-days (oh, what a shame) they resort to printed books with notations. There is no orderliness in the singing and so I have to perform the onerous task of conducting the group singing (without a baton but only with my hand).

As you are all aware, I have been an expert in this field through the cinema medium. Not only that; even in my concerts, I have evolved a new pattern making them approximate to orchestras. I have every possible instrument to accompany me on the percussion side and very soon I am going to incorporate the Tarai, Tappattai and Thamukku. Now the idiot

box, namely, the T.V., has come to provide a visual impact of the Aradhana and I by my God-blessed ingenuity have designed colourful costumes for me, to furnish a more colourful view, to the viewers. Our musicians, senior or junior, have no regard for colour and disgrace the group by revealing their bare bodies. How offensive would this look to the viewers, some of whom are foreign ladies, I leave it to your imagination. If I have my way, I would insist that only those with multicoloured Kurthas should be allowed to participate in the festival. Just one correction. Ladies, fortunately, have a sense of both colour and decency and they don't come bare-body.

I have been accused of allowing playback singers to participate in the festival irrespective of their classical musical powers. You know how much it costs to get the show going. Our senior musicians have never in their life learnt the art of giving but have only learnt to pinch from others. It is in these circumstances that I had to resort to the above method as these patrons of celluloid are lavish in bestowing large sums of money for being allowed to participate in the festival. I know many people will comment that Thyagaraja would be "turning in his grave" at all these attempts I am making to ensure the success of the festival. I have it an good authority that he left the place long ago unable to bear both the travesty of music emanating at the festival and the affront to the nostrils from the stink adjacent.

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Bala — The Artiste and the Person

BY

LAKSHMI VISWANATHAN

A whole new generation of dancers and dance-lovers has never seen Bala dance. The only film made of her is but a shadow of the great artiste she was. She can be described as many-faceted, magnetic, and all the things everyone has said about her. She was the most spectacular survivor of an era which saw dance transplanted from the temple and courts of nobility to the modern international stage. To many, her annual appearances at the Music Academy, were experiences remembered for different reasons. My earliest recollection of her is one of awe in the presence of something I should feel a distinct reverence for. When elders were moved to tears by her dance and waxed eloquent about Bala's and her mother's music, I felt keenly that in her performance, music and dance were one and the same thing. This knowledge is vital to any appreciation of her dance.

Tripod of Art

The ancient Tamil perception of Art as a three-fold concept consisting of Poetry, Music and Dance (Iyal, Isai & Natakam) was the basis of Bala's understanding of her art. The essence of her dance was Abhinaya - the art of communicating with body and face, using the rich fundamentals of melody, rhythm and lyric as the root-force. The suggestive expression of her ideas through Abhinaya was built on the foundation of rhythm, giving

it a texture special to dance. This is rhythm, not merely of the feet but rhythm of movement. It is the sense of timing, innate and intuitive, which links, imperceptibly, the different parts of the body while expressing an idea in measured and precise perfection. The body, thus disciplined in rhythm, then flows into an interminable series of changing patterns, reacting to the melody of song. Melody commands creation of mood in movement. A gentle tilt of the head in a Sahana phrase of a Kshetrajna padam, or a bold stance in a snatch of Kambodhi, are fine details in the melody of movement.

Poetry

The third dimension - poetry, further enriches the unfolding of an idea in Abhinaya. It is here that the suggestive element comes into sharp focus. Poetry does not narrate a story. In but a few words, it captures the mood of an entire situation in a poignant and telling manner. Furthermore, poetry is the springboard for an artiste's imagination. Taking a single phrase, the dancer can build castles of imagination. The variety of interpretations a dancer delineates, transforms her into a poet of movement and histrionics. This is the essence of Abhinaya as Bala understood it. She was, throughout her life as a dancer, aware of the depth of her intui-

tion and wisemad by her knowledge let her art speak for itself. Her guru Kandappa and mother Jayammal of whom she spoke often with a reverent fondness, instilled in her, at an early age, a consciousness of perfection which made her admit to only a chosen few of her own performances as meeting her high standards. So it was that compliments always sat lightly on her. She was not unaware of her own limitations.

Humility

In a rare moment of reminiscence, she once recalled dancing for Huxley. She had made a mistake in a Tillana. ... She insisted that her musicians repeat the phrase until she had interpreted it correctly undeterred by the presence of a celebrity. Huxley later wrote her a letter, saying that he had heard that she was a great artiste before he came to see her; but when she admitted a mistake and repeated her movements until she could perfect them, he could fully realise how "great" she indeed was.

Mother & Daughter

Her grandmother, Veena Dhanam, was called "Sangeetham" by her admirers. Inheriting the richness of that music, Jayammal and Bala formed a duo, the one complementing the other, and making her dance an exercise in visual music. Mother and daughter were at times daring innovators. Influenced and inspired by the music of great North Indian Ustads, they vied with each other in letting their voices soar with imagination, bringing the lilt and romance of the Thumri of a Siddheswari Devi or a Begum Akhtar into

some of these interpretations. It was no wonder that in an article written years ago T. R. Mahalingam, the flute maestro, included Bala's music among other greats as having influenced and impressed his own genius.

Memorable Recitals

There were occasions when she would recall some of her memorable performances. One such was in the early thirties when another Virtuoso—Konnakkol Pakkiriiah Pillai had organised a fund-raising recital at Mannargudi. Bala remembered that the concert started at about 10 p.m. She began with the Khanda Alarippu, with Jayamma singing the Tiruppugazh "Koorvel Pazhitha". Bala went through the piece like a flash of lightning and warmed up to do the Varnam in Khamas, in such detail inspired by her mother's singing, that, time was forgotten, and the concert concluded eventually at 3 a.m.

On another occasion at a Conference organised by Pandit Omkarnath Thakore, Bala and Jayammal performed to a capacity crowd well into the early hours of dawn. Connoisseurs felt that Bala had taken the Avatar of Krishna that evening and shown them His Leelas.

Lord Harewood

It was Lord Harewood who introduced the West to Bala's art by inviting her to perform in the Edinburgh festival in 1963. Bala related the story of how, soon afterwards, TTK who was an admirer of her art, during a speech to felicitate her, remarked that although he was pleased with the reception she got in the West, he won-

dered whether the audience there could comprehend the depth of her Abhinaya. Replying to this valid query, Lord Harewood remarked that after Bala's performance, people were humming "Krishna Nee Begane" on the streets of Edinburgh—what better "rasikas" can one get?

Much has been written and spoken about her art, yet leaving a feeling that words do not reproduce mental images of her direct communication with a spectator. As a person, Bala, clad most often in a simple cotton saree, her hair casually knotted at the nape of her neck, stood out in a crowd by her regal bearing.

Her Bhakthi

A frequent visitor to the Kapaliswara Temple in Mylapore during her later years, she would stand mesmerised seeing the dance of the Pradosha Murti (the deity taken out in procession). One could observe the devotee, forgetting herself in a moment of communion with the Lord.

N. B. By kind courtesy of the Local Advisory council of the International Dance Alliance Ltd., which in association with the Music Academy observed the International Dance Day at Madras on 19th January 1986, as a tribute to Balasaraswathi and Bent Sommers, This article is taken from the excellent Souvenir brought out to commemorate the occasion—Editor

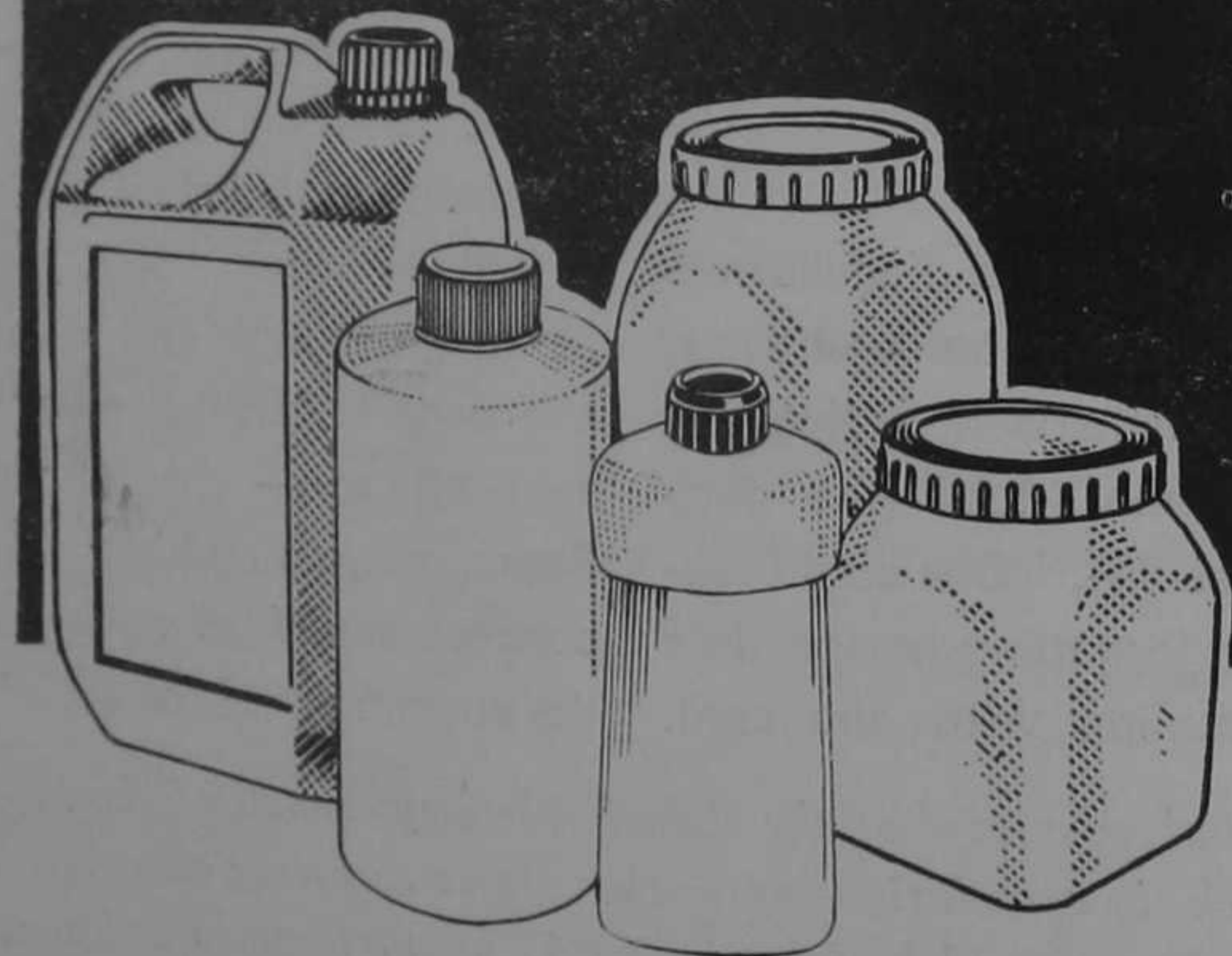
She was a true rasika—one could see it in the way she appreciated the music of the Oduvar—greeting him with a reverence we ourselves would reserve for her.

She exuded a warmth towards people she had rapport with—an old-world charm sparkling in her eyes, face animated with a joy quite inexplicable. There was a beguiling touch of annoyance when she spoke scornfully of things she disapproved of. She had a child-like attachment for dolls and was proud to display a collection from her travels. When she spoke, it was always with a directness and precision of thought.

Remarking on the fact that she had turned down the invitation to perform with her daughter Lakshmi during the Festival of India in Britain 1982, she said that with her failing health and at her age, she did not want to insult a great art. That was her attitude—her contribution to Bharatanatyam and her talent, she always conceptualised as serving a greater end—the enrichment of the art of dance.



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Rukmini Arundale, Embodiment of Art & Culture

Smt. Rukmini Devi, who passed away in February last after a short illness, was a leader of incomparable courage, vision and humanity. She had an intuitive apostolate of Art in exelcis and a mind rich in radiating force which soaked up and assimilated the highest cultural traditions of India. She therefore dedicated her whole life for the revival of music and dance on the one hand and the evolution of a proper relationship between the arts and education on the other. According to Stendhal, beauty is the promise of happiness. Rukmini Devi's credo was that "peoples of every clime and religion could lead a life of harmony and happiness, by pursuing the highest ideals of art" She felt that "there could be no culture which separates art from daily life and which separates daily life from great philosophies.

This truth was well understood in the olden times and every Indian home was an example of our deepest ideals of life". As Renoir once put it, "the concept of the divine in superior peoples has always been accompanied by ideas of order, of hierarchy and of tradition."

The Call of Destiny

Rukmini was obsessed by a sense of destiny even in her teens and took the bold but highly controversial step of marrying George S. Arundale, the heir of Dr. Annie Besant in the Theosophical movement and thereby linked her life with that movement. Madras society in 1920 was too steeped in orthodoxy to give its

imprimatur to so bold a step taken by a girl in her teens and hailing from a conservative Brahmin family. The shock waves even affected the staid "Hindu" which wrote leading articles in disapproval. It is a measure of Rukmini's courage that she not only remained undaunted but eventually brought all the members of the family into the Theosophical fold in which the mantle of leadership fell on some of her own kith and kin.

In the "Young Citizen" (monthly, published then by the Theosophical Society) of February 1949, she wrote :

"I have a five-pointed star of Theosophy. Viz. Beauty as Art, Education as the child, Motherhood as Woman, Humanity as the Poor, and the Animal ...The new world for me is not the world that speaks the words of Krishna through the books, but who speaks through the eyes of a child, an animal, through colour, form, music. To me Education and Art inspired by the spirit is the lovely rainbow to the dark world".

Ideals Translated

These ideas were embodied in the Besant Theosophical School, the Arundale Montessori Training Centre and Kalakshetra: the great Trinity of Humanity, Spirituality and Beauty. To this day, these stand as cherished monuments to those ideals.

Rukmini was convinced that music and dance were not only great assets to

our national culture but a necessity for spiritual development. And she founded Kalakshetra as an important instrument of such a realisation. The artist O.C. Gangoly gave beautiful expression to this vision in an address delivered at the Besant Centenary in October 1947. He said :

“The history of our visual arts has demonstrated that some of the finest and loftiest of the utterances of our greatest sages and savants have been expressed in the silent and more pregnant languages of our visual and figurative arts, in the shapes of images and icons, in the brooding and soaring forms of our temples and shrines”.

Pioneer in Dance

Kalakshetra therefore concentrated on dance and music, in both of which India's heritage is so precious and so inspiring. Realising the true spiritual conception behind the art of dance, Rukmini lifted Bharata Natyam from the low trough it had lain in for centuries, being confined to a class of artists considered low in the social hierarchy. Pavlova's dance spurred her to train herself under the most exacting and exalted of teachers of Bharata Natyam like Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai etc. and give public performances. She also personally directed the training of young people at the ages of 6, 8, 10 etc. and A. Sarada amazed her with her devotion, thoroughness and splendour in the dance held at the Theosophical convention in December 1949.

Artistic Efflorescence

At one stroke, the age-old constraints of prejudice and orthodoxy were swept

away. Rukmini's respect for strict classicism went side by side with her imaginative presentation. Her stage settings were a marvel, the drops scenes, the backgrounds, the side curtain, etc. were thrillingly artistic and entirely Indian in conceptual design and the dance partaking of the character of divine manifestation. Once Rukmini had belled the cat of conservatism, dance schools were started all over India and the great renaissance in Bharata Natyam and other forms of dance began to take shape. Today, it is in full flower and every home has a dancer or a musician.

Rabindranath Tagore sent Rukmini a translation of a verse of his, which is as follows :

“O Shiva, the child,
know me for thy lover,
thy disciple in dancing,
teach me the wisdom of unconcern,
teach me how to guide my steps
to the time of thy footfalls,
how to move freely by rending the
webs
of one's own weaving”.

In an address delivered at San Francisco in September 1948, Rukmini reverts to her favourite theme, the temple, the cradle of Indian civilisation:

“In India the art centre is not the museum but the temple, where spirit and form mingle. From this art centre the idea of beauty as a revelation of the divine spreads to the home and the world. Unless form is permeated with spirit, art becomes merely a clever technical expression of the lower emotions.

Dance is a transcendence of motion by emotion and a transcending of sound... The dance should not be viewed like a window display. Through his art, the dancer invites each and all to join him in transcending ordinary levels of thought and feeling. In this way, a more spiritual quality of life is brought back into the everyday living of individuals”.

The ideal comradeship of Rukmini Devi and George Arundale for over a quarter of a century helped her a lot. George surrounded his lovely, intelligent, intuitional artist-wife with every circumstance conducive to her mission and her genius. And when he died, her great artistic movement for the revival of the arts had been securely launched. Outsiders can have but a dim idea of the debt she owed to Dr. Besant and Arundale in her life's mission.

Difficult Days Ahead

But it was not roses all the way for her. In May 1949, in her famous column “The Crow's Nest” in the “Young Citizen”, Rukmini says:

“The three institutions, the Besant Theosophical School, the Arundale Montessori Centre and Kalakshetra are all running under heavy deficits. Besides these, I am the head of the Dr. Swaminatha Iyer Library, which is publishing the priceless works of that great scholar. I have to find money for this also. Combined with the fact that I must buy land and build houses and make plans for moving from June 1950 from the estate of the Theosophical Society makes my responsibility

heavy indeed. Yet I go on happily for I have the inner knowledge that this work is blessed and even when there is no money, I find the energy and enthusiasm to carry on...”

And carry on she did, as we know and realised the fruition of her great dreams, as Kalakshetra celebrated its Golden Jubilee in December 1985. Luckily for us, Rukmini just lived to see the grand celebrations. She had the satisfaction of seeing the institution grow from a primary offshoot of seminal energy to an exalted and highly respected position in the annals of international dance and music.

Kalakshetra's Musical Tradition

Music has always gone hand in hand with dance. Kalakshetra's musical traditions were of the highest since Rukmini could persuade such musical giants as Tiger Varadachari, Mysore Vasudevachar, Karaikudy Sambasiva Iyer, Papanasam Sivan etc. to take up residence in the colony and teach music in a manner akin to *gurukulavasa*. Similarly, on the dance side, there were giants to teach Bharata-Natyam, Kathakali etc. Today's leading teachers of dance in Madras like Adyar Lakshmanan, the Dhananjayans, Prof. C. V. Chandrasekhar (now in Baroda) etc. are keeping the torch aloft, just as the late M. D. Ramanathan did for music and Pasupati, Ramanathan, Janakiraman, Mani Krishnaswami etc. are doing even now.

According to Arnold Bennett, “the first attribute of genius is fineness of mind. The artist's mind must be permeated and

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controlled by common sense. But he must be able to conceive the ideal without losing sight of the fact that it is a human world we live in". Rukmini Devi's *magnum opus*, the Ramayana Dance-drama series and the Kuravanjis, remain as a monument to her artistic genius. She had the imagination and capacity to make them peaks of aesthetic joy and artistic achievement. She had the extra-ordinary will power to kindle idealism and make people work for her, to get the best out of them and to make them feel as happy partners in the glorious enterprise. It would be invidious to single out for mention anyone from her entourage but Sri Sankara Menon, her closest associate for decades, is on a different footing. He was her conscience, her trustworthy partner on whom she could lean. Now

Kalakshetra looks up to him to lead them. To make maestros like Tiger or Vasudeva-char compose according to the dictates of her judgement, shows the force of her personality and her indomitable will to get things done well. As they say, *Finis Coronat Opus*.

A Monument

Rukmini all through her life was harping on temples as the pinnacle of our artistic ideals. No wonder that she built for Kalakshetra a monument that embodies the culture and traditions of our ancient temples and which is a sheer delight to watch and perform in. It is a legacy which not only India but the world at large can be proud of. K S M

Nitya Nritya — Conference & Dance Festival

Bangalore

Bangalore appears to be vying for honours with Madras in the encouragement to Indian dance forms by holding an annual conference and festival. In particular, for the third year in succession, NUPURA Dance school got up an impressive six-day conference and festival involving the exponents of the different dance forms—Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Odissi, Mohini Attam and Yakshagana, from within and outside this State. As usual, academic sessions were held in the smaller hall of the Gokhale Institute in Malleswaram and the evening cultural programmes at the spacious Chowdiah Memorial hall. The core theme of the

morning sessions was an in-depth exposition of 'Bhava and Rasa' in our arts with particular reference to dance. While the lectures as such were scholarly, the lecture demonstrations were more purposeful in bringing home the point to the audience. By and large, it was agreed that the sensitive presentation of Bhava by the artiste resulted in the evocation of Rasa in the audience—thus explaining the inter-relation between the two concepts as cause and effect, brought about by the giver and receiver.

Dr. S. S. Janaki from Madras spoke about Bharatha's theory of Rasa with

profuse quotations from the original texts. Guru Lalitha Srinivasan of the Nupura dance school presented her students in pure Nritta sequences to evoke Bhava and Rasa through Angikabhinaya—body language. Dr. N. S. Anantharangachar, an eminent Samskrit scholar, spoke about Samskrit literary works containing episodes suitable for Bhavabhinaya. Dr. Mrinalini Sarabhai, who has more than four decades of experience in the field as Dancer, choreographer and Guru at the National and international level, presented some of her students of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts at Ahmedabad in certain modern themes based on the cardinal principles of Bharathanatyam, to establish the art of evoking Bhava and Abhinava effectively. She incidentally suggested that instead of repeating time-worn themes from Mythology, Dancers could experiment with modern/contemporary themes within the framework of our hoary traditions of Nritta, Nritya and Abhinaya.

A Scientific enquiry

Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao, who is an authority on a vast variety of subjects, including music and dance and Alankara Sastra, gave a brilliant, educative, informative talk on the subject from the scientific enquiry point of view. He explained at some length the physiological sources of the outflow of Bhava and Rasa in 'homo sapiens'. He pointed out that the intensity of Bhava and Rasa in the artiste and the audience was in proportion to their involvement and experience.

Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna from Andhra gave the subject a practical turn when he followed up his lecture with a demonstra-

tion from his repertoire of 'Nava Janardhanam' of the Perini dance system practised by the Devadasis of Andhra—different from the Kuchipudi dance system. He cast a spell on the audience of dancers, dance students and dance lovers when by the sheer use of only the eyes and facial muscles, he depicted a number of sentiments—for example, the word 'Evvado' (who is it) in umpteen different ways without the use of manual gestures. It was an object lesson in Bhavabhinaya of the most evocative kind.

Concepts of Bhava & Rasa

Dr. G. S. Shivarudrappa, an eminent Kannada man of literature, spoke in Kannada about the concept of Bhava and Rasa in present day art. He pointed out that the same action may produce different reactions in different individuals according to the mental approach of that individual for different reasons. Smt. Krishnaveni Lakshmanan, a well known protege of Smt Rukmini Devi of Adyar Kalakshetra gave a lecture demonstration with particular reference to Rasa and Bhava in varnams. She presented a varnam in which the same concept involved a Nayika who expresses her innermost feelings in many different ways.

In Kathakali

A different type of experience was in store for the audience when Prof. Govindan Kutti of Calcutta 'Kalamandalam Centre' gave a lecture-demonstration on Rasa abhinaya in Kathakali. He demonstrated the 'Navarasas' through 'Netrabhinaya' involving the use of the eyebrows, the eyes, the area surrounding the labial region, with its distinct identity in stylisa-

tion Mr. T. S. Parthasarathi, Secretary of the Music Academy, Madras, who has made a deep study of music and dance, explained Rasa and Bhava evoked by Padams and Javalis. He expressed his happiness at conferences exclusively devoted to Dance being held in Bangalore also. He said that the delineation of padams, generally in slow tempo, dealt with the triangle of a Nayika, a Sakhi and a Nayaka. In padavarnams, each word was emoted in different ways. Javalis were composed by persons who were not musicians. Young Sujatha Srinivasan of Madras presented two padams and two Javalis to substantiate his points very ably. She impressed everybody with her little movements, grace and beauty.

Dr. Gowri Kuppaswami and Dr. Hariharan from Mysore jointly dealt with the subject in dance compositions of different types. The former sang some excerpts from padams, Javalis, Devaranamas, and Ashtapadis as illustrations appropriate to what Dr. Hariharan made

out in his paper. Eminent Yakshagana exponent Shambhu Hegde gave lecture demonstration of 'Bhavabhinaya in Yakshagana'. Its rather strident music, exaggerated movements of the limbs and facial expressions created a dramatic impact, bringing out its folk roots. The influence of Kathakali on Yakshagana was also discernible.

Dance programmes

There were six dance programmes in the mornings to provide opportunities for local Junior artistes. Two programmes in the evenings each day by Senior and popular artistes of the calibre of Sonal Mansingh, Padmini Rao, Kala Krishna (disciple of Nataraj Ramakrishna) Rashmi Vajpayee (Kathak), Krishnaveni Lakshman (Bharathanatyam, Shambhu Hegde (Yakshagana) Sridevi Unni and her daughter Monisha Unni (Mohini Attam) and Rohintam Cama (Bharathanatyam) were largely attended and very much appreciated.

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Cultivating Aesthetic Literacy

By

LAKSHMI VISWANATHAN

In the 'Silappadikaram', the epic written by Ilango Adigal, a Jaina prince, about 1800 years ago, a fantastic picture of the highly evolved state of dance and its allied arts is presented to us. The author gives us the impression of being an aesthete and connoisseur. He was a prince and it is not surprising that he had cultivated a taste for various aspects of culture. Historically, we find in every age the kings and nobility being patrons of art and artists, having cultivated a special taste in these matters.

The author stresses the importance of the arduous years of training that a professional dancer had to undergo. The teacher or Guru was equally versatile, being an expert in every aspect, both theoretical and practical, of the arts of music and dance. At her debut Madhavi, one of the chief characters of the epic, is described as dancing in strict conformity with prescribed rules laid out in the texts :

"Nattiya Nannul Nangu Kadaipidittuk Kattinal". (Tamil)

Madhavi's dance was in the presence of the king who is said to have honoured her with a garland and presents of gold.

Specialists in Music & Dance

What seems obvious from Ilango Adigal's account is that there were specialists

in the field of music and dance who worked together. It does not appear as though their expertise was shared by the common people. The latter on the other hand indulged in group dances, pastoral in character, dancing mainly to propitiate deities, to ward off evil etc. Others were involved in martial dance on the battlefield. A critical appreciation and response to Madhavi's dance was the presence of the cultured elite. One of them was the author who obviously cultivated his interest in the arts, enabling him to weave a wealth of information on the subject into the main story line.

A Way of Life

Patronage of classical dance and music has, from the time of the Silappadikaram, been the presence of the elite of our society. Whether it was Raja Raja Chola who employed four hundred women for temple dance service or the Mahratta King Sahaji who endowed villages to artists and was himself a poet and composer, in the context of Tamil Nadu, the arts of dance and music stayed close to royal patronage. The atmosphere in the courts was such that one hears accounts of poets vying with composers of music, dancers excelling themselves to obtain and enhance the favours given to them, and the nobility making the appreciation of the arts a way of life.

It was the courtiers and nobility, who had the education to understand the intricacies of the arts. Whether it was appreciation or critical evaluation of a raga, or the interpretation of a poetic piece in dance, the initiated were the taste-dictators. The common people probably brushed close to the periphery of the arts of dance and music where perhaps they witnessed a performance on the occasion of the annual temple festivals. They probably were excited by the spectacle, and enjoyed all the colour that went with it. However, it is hardly likely that they understood much of it.

The Changed Scene

At the present day, educating the cultural elite is one of the important duties of an artiste. It is common knowledge that classical music and dance are now based in urban centres, big or small. In this modern environment, they are having to face stiff competition from populist culture which is represented basically by the cinema, and all forms of dance, drama and music connected with it. To increase the number, however small they may be, of the people who can understand, appreciate and evaluate performances of classical dance is an uphill task. But it has been proved beyond doubt that it is not impossible.

The Era of Conferences, Workshops

Latterly, one of the main springboards for cultivating a new audience is the presentation of lectures and demonstrations. The name "conference" has now come to mean a morning session of lecture/demonstration. In Madras, during the December Festival season, at least four con-

ference sessions are on simultaneously. The focus used to be more on purely technical matters of music a decade ago. Today the papers read and the demonstrations given are less rigidly academic and reach out to more people without negating the basic academic interest.

As convenor of a dance conference, I had several challenges to face. I tried to bring a variety of topics and personalities together and found that each year the audience increased in numbers and their interest seemed to be converging more on acquiring a deeper understanding of the styles rather than stop with a superficial appreciation of spectacle. No doubt, the generosity of great artists in sharing their knowledge played a great role in creating the right atmosphere.

Need for Widening the Scope

However, I now feel that the time has come to make the scope of a dance conference wider. Firstly, a workshop situation can be evolved where different artists and audience should participate in order to make innovative work more challenging. Secondly, discussions can be focussed on the conditions of performance in the modern context—such as theatre environment and design, lighting and stage design, costume and props.

Whetting the Appetite

Finally the basic idea of the conference can now be extended to other cities—probably to smaller towns in Tamil Nadu or even elsewhere where thousands of basically interested but uncultivated audiences are waiting to be educated. After all, in the Chidambaram experience, the annual NATYANJALI which is open to the

public, attracts thousands who are willing to stay up all night just to be excited by spectacle. Don't at least a few hundreds of these people deserve to be educated? Can we not go on to the next step of refining their tastes? Should they not eventually become sensitive to nuances rather than be content to watch anybody dancing on a TV monitor all night?

The future progress of classical dance thus hinges on audience education—a conscious cultivation of taste, a deliberate refinement of ideas on aesthetics, and a gradual evolution of the role from that of passive spectators to committed rasikas. Such a goal of both artistes as well as organisers seems to be worth striving for.

Rasa and Bhava in Padams and Javalis*

The term 'Padam' is generally used to denote a musical composition replete with the sentiment of love, divine or mundane and meant to accompany and guide dancing. No clear definition of this term is found in any of the common treatises on music or dance and it is difficult to determine how it gained currency in this sense.

PADAM

The Natya Sastra mentions the padam as an indispensable constituent of the Gandharva. Bharata has used the term in the sense of 'sahitya' or any song employed for abhinaya. Kalidasa has used the word in his 'Meghasandesam' when he describes the wife of the banished Yaksha trying to pour out her feelings of separation by composing a 'geyam padam'. Jayadeva calls his Gita Govindam as a 'padavali'. Later the term was used somewhat loosely to mean the compositions of Purandara Dasa and others. Even Tyagaraja, in one of his kritis, describes a devotional song as a 'padam' (vide 'Samayamu delisi' in Asaveri).

But from the time of Kshetrajna (c.1600–1680) the concept of the term 'padam' as a musical and dance composition stabilized to mean a song in slow tempo, saturated with the sringara rasa and having the nayaka-nayika bhava as the motif. Composers drew inspiration from works like the Rasamanjari of Bhanu Datta Misra, Sringara Tilaka and Amaru Satakam. Many new types of nayikas were added to the conventional eight and a few types of the nayaka have also been depicted.

King of Padams

Although the earliest specimens of this kind of composition are the sringara sankirtanas of Tallapakkam Annamacharya, Kshetrajna is the uncrowned king in the field of padam. With an uncommon command over the Telugu idiom, he is an adept in employing it in the most telling and felicitous manner possible. He favours the *kaisiki vritti*—soft, flowing and seductive. With a mastery over the

*Summary of a talk delivered by Sri T. S. Parthasarathy on March 7, 1986 at the Nitya Nritya 1986 sponsored by NUPURA, Bangalore.

alankara literature of his time, he portrays faithfully the characteristics of the heroes and heroines as laid down in works on rasa. His words are pregnant with subtle ideas and he is a wizard in making the implied or suggested sense of a passage (dhvani) more striking than the explicit sense. Apart from the musical or dance aspects of the padams of this composer, they are worth conning even as specimens of Telugu literature.

Kshetrajna appears to have lived for a longer time in Tamilnadu than in Andhra Desa and spent many years in the courts of Tirumala Nayak at Madurai and Vijayaraghava Nayak at Thanjavur. Most of the deities he has praised are enshrined in temples in Tamilnadu. His padams are, therefore, more popular in the Tamil-speaking areas than in Andhra.

The Others

Next to Kshetrajna comes Sarangapani in quality and popularity. This composer was born at Ponneri and was patronized by the zamindar of Karvetnagar. He was himself a good dancer.

Muvvalur Sabhapatayya, Melattur Virabhadrayya and Melattur Venkatarama Sastri are among the composers of Telugu padams who lived in Tamilnadu. Tamil composers of padams appear to have come into the field later and they include Muttu-tandavar, Marimutta Pillai, Papavinasa Mudaliar, Ghanam Krishna Iyer and Subbarama Iyer. But their padams are not comparable to those of Kshetrajna, for example, as they are not distinguishable from kirtanas except in some cases where they have employed the nayaka-nayika

motif as in Telugu padams. Svati Tirunal is an outstanding composer of padams, his contribution being 67 songs in Malayalam, Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada. These have a literary flavour of their own as the Ruler has invested his lyrics with a true poetic ring. Raja Serfoji of Thanjavur has also composed padams in Marathi and some of them are specifically called 'abhinaya padams'.

JAVALIS

Javalis, which are of later origin than padams, are often called miniature padams but they are composed in a lighter vein and in less serious music than the padams. They treat love on its lighter side, employing mostly colloquial Telugu with some humour here and there. The heroes and heroines of Javalis are not of the padam type and often indulge in banter and good natured wit and sarcasm.

The Javali composers should not however, be taken lightly. Two of them, Dharmapuri Subbarayar and Tiruppanandal Pattabhiramayya, were geniuses in their own way although, strangely enough, they were not professional musicians but were holding clerical posts. Yet they had an uncanny grasp of the Javali form and handled ragas like Khamas, Pharaz, Yamunakalyani and Behag with striking effect and adroitness. They even handled rakti ragas like Kalyani, Mukhari, Bilahari and Purvikalyani with great originality and verve.

Sujatha Impresses

(As a part of the lecture-demonstration Kumari Sujatha Srinivasan, the young and talented dancer of Madras, performed abhinaya for two padams and two javalis to

bring out their true rasa and bhava. She first took up 'Magadochi pilichedu' in Sahana by Sarangapani and depicted, with great feeling and pathos, how the heroine who had fallen in love with Lord Venugopala bids him farewell when her husband comes and commands her to accompany him. She then danced to the famous Tamil padam 'Padari varukudu' in Kam-bhoji by Subbarama Iyer. In this padam the nayika describes to her sakhi the pangs of separation she suffers in the absence of

her Lord Subrahmanya and entreats her to go and fetch the divine lover:

'Parulanna mata' in Hindustani Kapi is a javali of Dharmapuri Subbarayar which describes the nayaka returning to his wife after being jilted by another woman. 'Vani pondu' in Kanada by the same composer is a song in which the nayika decides to break away from her lover because of his treachery. Sujatha depicted these situations with grace, facility and a touch of humour where necessary).

Cultural Feast in Madras

Welcomgroup completed 10 years in Madras at the end of January '86 and celebrated it with a fortnight of cultural events for the promotion of art, culture, health etc, programmes spanning a wide area of human interests. Alarmel Valli, the noted Bharatha Natya exponent, inaugurated "Expressions in Movement" with her recital which was followed by an art exhibition featuring the Rhythm of Movement by painters Hebbur, Hussain, Khatan etc. It was in fact a fortnight of celebrations, vibrant and vivacious and Mr. K. K. Malhotra, the Regional Director for Southern Region of hotel chains, claimed with some justice, "we believe we are a part of the lives of the people in Madras". They seem to be.

Sangeet Sammelan.

The Sangeet Sammelan was naturally an integral part of the celebrations and attracted wide interest, The "Mandapam"

of Chola Sheraton, Madras, was full to overflowing. The percussion presentation on 31st January '86, comprising Zakir Hussain (Tabla), T. H. Vinayak Ram (Ghatam) and Hari Shankar (Kanjira), drew spontaneous appreciation. It went on for over an hour, yet did not pall, so much so that one wondered why so many leave their seats when the "thani avarthanam" interlude commences in Carnatic music recitals, not only in Madras but everywhere.

Was it the charisma of Zakir Hussain, the tablaist with his radiant face and incredibly nimble fingers or was it the sober brilliance of Vinayak Ram and Harishankar in which virtuosity and accuracy of rhythm went hand in hand with a tidiness and clarity that only Carnatic musical discipline can provide? Be it as it may, what counts is that the large audience sat glued to their seats and gave the trio a big hand at the

end. T. S. Eliot's lines came to mind :
"The endless cycle of idea and action
Endless invention, endless experi-
ment".

Maharajapuram

Maharajapuram Santhanam's vocal recital on 1st Feb. 1986 drew a packed house. Dr. V. G. Jog, the well-known violinist of Bombay and no less a celebrity than Pandit Ravi Shankar (who had come to Madras to give a Sitar recital at Kalakshetra), were part of Santhanam's knowledgeable audience. Sankarabaranam, Todi etc. raga alapanas and kritis flowed from him in cascades of memorable tone and tune, excellently supported by M. Chandrasekharan's artistry on the violin (which often drew approving nods from Ravi Shankar). Hindusthani ragas like Dvijavanthi found plenty of room in the recital which became a "star-spangled banner" for Santhanam's musicianship. Vellore Ramabadrana supplied an oil-smooth percussion accompaniment to this moving recital in which melody was a major ingredient. Dr. Kitchelw of the Sangeetha Research Academy of Calcutta introduced the various artists to the audience.

Triplicane Cultural Academy

Sangitha Kalanidhi Dr. S. Ramana—than continues to be felicitated even months after he was honoured by the Music Academy. a proof of the wide but spontaneous esteem in which the public holds him. Among these, one would like to single out for special mention the reception accorded to him by the Triplicane Cultural Academy, an institution doing silent but

splendid work in the fields of art and literature and is now celebrating its Silver Jubilee. Distinguished persons from different walks of life participate in the lectures, symposia etc. arranged by it on matters of public interest—for instance, a talk on the Central Budget is a hardy annual—it affords encouragement to artistic and literary talents, runs a reading room and a library started by the late Kasturi Srinivasan of the "Hindu" in 1960 and having more than 20,000 books on all subjects.

A Day with Tyagaraja

At the felicitation held on 14th February 1986 at the Sama Rao school, Singarachari Street, Triplicane, the chief guest was Dr. M. S. Subbulakshmi while the speakers included Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. In his inimitable way, Semmangudi pinpointed Dr. Ramanathan's valuable contribution to the basic understanding of the foundations and development of Carnatic music. He described Dr. Ramanathan as both an efficient teacher and a competent artist, a rare combination according to Semmangudi who was himself a teacher of music for decades and ought to know what it really takes to achieve a fusion of these two skills. Dr. Ramanathan then presented the Utsava Sampradaya Kritis of Sri Tyagaraja—"Day with Tyagaraja" is a familiar theme for him. There was both richness of emotion as well as sweetness and melody in this memorable presentation. Tyagaraja came alive.

All Sabhas will do well to project these exclusive aspects of Sri Tyagaraja's immortal music to the public; one cannot

think of a more effective means of promoting listener - understanding.

SPIC-Macay

FEST is a festival of music and dance held every year in January-February. The 1986 FEST featured Maharajapuram Santhanam (vocal), Lalgudi Jayaraman (Solo violin) on the Carnatic side. Pandit Jasraj and Shivakumar Sharma (Santoor) on the Hindusthani side, while dance was represented by Sonal Mansingh (Odissi). Youngsters like Vijayasiva (vocal-carnatic) and Priya Mahadevan (Bharatha Natyam), Sujatha Srinivasa (Bharatha Natyam) supplied the right blend of experience and youthful promise. These concerts and dances were held in different colleges in Madras and the attendances were phenomenally large. Each venue was rich in floral and other decorations and the organisers enforced some basic discipline - eg. no one was allowed to enter or leave the hall while the music or dance was in progress, a commendable Western discipline yet to seep into the minds of Indian audiences.

SPIC-MACAY's laudable ambition is to make our traditional culture a part of the life of our youth and to wean youth from the tendency to ignore, not to say slight, the richness of our cultural heritage. It was started in 1978 by students and today, it has blossomed into an All India organisation with student chapters in over 25 cities and 50 colleges and schools. Its main thrust is by way of (a) concerts by top artists (b) Lecture-demonstrations (c) recreation of [Upasaka-rasika relationships and the transmission of creative joy from the artiste to the audience (d) Yoga

camps, Bhakti theatre series. The movement has received a unique response from the top echelons of music and dance of all varieties, a tribute to its genuine aspirations and dedicated motivation and to Mr. T. T. Vasu's guiding hand.

Perhaps it is time to take stock and count the gains of this movement. People are apt to treat it as so much ballyhoo—another of those ebbs and tides that characterise artistic movements in every age and clime. What has really to be countered is philistinism—what Eliot meant when he said "The men you are in these times deride, What has been done of good, You find explanations to satisfy the rational and enlightened mind". Has that change of heart come about in the minds of our youth?

The answer, alas, is not clear. The film, the idiot box, jazzy music still hold their unrelenting sway over young, plastic minds. But there is no need to despair over our heritage; the imperishable citadels of our culture, will still stand, though their walls may be covered with the ivy of mindless neglect. Meanwhile no harm will be done by SPIC-MACV conducting tests, oral and written, among the various chapters, to get some idea of how far its crusade is succeeding. Such periodical assessments should be the reverse side of its coinage, the obverse being the music and dance presentations. Good Luck! SPIC-MACAY!

Saraswathi's Dikshitar Akanda

It is a well known fact that many, many more of Tyagaraja's kritis are rendered in public concerts than those of Dikshitar or Syama Sastry. About 50 years ago, only a handful of the latter's output were known

and sung. This imbalance has been steadily redressed, thanks to the contributions of T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, D. K. Pattammal, D. K. Jayaraman, B. Rajam Iyer and the publication of Sampradaya Pradarsini volumes by the Music Academy. The listening public, too, has been educated into appreciation of the striking grandeur of Dikshitar's output and the great musical richness of Syama Sastry. Publications containing their kritis with meaning and notations have helped too. The offer of prizes in competitions for the rendering of their kritis held by the Sabhas has given a further fillip to the rising generation to learn them, however imperfectly. In fine, there is in the musical environment today a growing awareness of the great contributions of Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastry. This augurs well for the maintenance of our musical tradition and growth on sound lines.

One has heard or read about non-stop singing or performing of Tyagaraja's compositions undertaken by artists young and old to the point of flippancy, one fears. But of Dikshitar's pieces, "Saraswathi" is probably the first sabha to organise in March a full day's singing and that, too, by some of the leading lights—Messrs. T.V. Sankaranarayanan, Smt. R. Vedavalli, T.M.

Thiagarajan, D.K. Jayaraman, B. Rajam Iyer, Smt. Charumati Ramachandran, K.V. Narayanaswami, etc. with first rate accompaniments. Most appropriately, Sangitha Kalanidhi D.K. Pattammal inaugurated the proceedings.

About 53 pieces of Dikshitar were rendered during the 12-hour span (9 A.M.—9 P.M.) non-stop. Raga alapānas on a small scale were permitted, just to reduce the possible advent of boredom or inattention (a wise move), this being the first stretched-out exposure to Dikshitar Kritis.

It was gratifying to see that the musicians co-operated sincerely and made a very sincere effort to present the Kritis in their true perspectives. The large crowd present not only seemed to enjoy and appreciate the heavy diet of music presented but went home at least a bit wiser and more knowledgeable for the rare treat offered. And now can we look forward to a similar demonstration of Syama Sastri's "music from "Saraswathi"? Sri N. V. Subramaniam, the tireless President, can be depended upon to provide an answer before long.

KSM



Memories of A Master of Lakshyagnana

by

T. B. NARASIMHACHAR

I consider it a privilege to reminisce about the music of one of the two doyens of Carnatic music of this century, whom I have known for many years and fairly intimately - Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. These two represented a study in contrast in musical approaches. Some of us-his fans-referred to Viswanatha Iyer as the Maharaja of Sangeethapuram; he was every inch a musicians' musician as G. N. B. and Ramnad Krishnan often averred.

It was not given to all and sundry to appreciate his musical ideas. In his concerts, one had to be sensitive and ever alert to catch those moments of supreme musical excellence which used to flash across the musical horizon with the brilliance of a comet. He did not have a fantastic voice to thrill the average music lover with flights of fancy in the three octaves. But during his lifetime, he was greatly respected by his comperes.

In 1947 I listened to a concert of Maharajapuram at the Hindu High School hall, Triplicane, under the auspices of Sri Parthasarathyswami Sabha, when V. Govindaswami Naicker substituted for T. Chowdiah on the violin and the immortal Palght Mani Iyer played on the mridangam. That evening Abheri raga was elaborated, followed by that masterpiece 'Nagumomu'

The maestro's manodharma was so rich, original and many-splendoured that the audience forgot all about the same raga and krithi immortalised in gramophone by Musiri Snbramanya Iyer. In the December music festival of 1953 Ariyakkudi, G.N.B. and Maharajapuram chanced to sing Kamboji raga and "Sri Subrahmanyaya Namasthe" at different venues. Maharajapuram's version was so outstanding that he made listeners forget Ariyakkudi's masterpiece. Chowdiah was the violinist and in my experience, Chowdiah had the knack of bringing out the best in Maharajapuram repeatedly, even as he used to do in the case of GNB and others.

During the summer of 1959, Maharajapuram was my guest for about a fortnight. In the late evening, we would sit in the veranda without lights and he would ask me what Raga I wanted to listen. I replied that he was an artiste who could illumine any raga with his colourful imagination and so any raga would be welcome. One evening he sang Bhairavi raga and the Devaranama 'Vasudevana Nenedu sukhiyagu Manave' (Think of Vasudeva and be happy O mind) and asked me to correct any errors in the sahitya with my knowledge of Kannada. There was no need but I explained the meaning of the lyrics. Such was his integrity and simplicity.

Maharajapuram like Ariyakudi was a staunch and sincere devotee of Tyagaraja. This I had occasion to notice on those occasions when I kept him company in Bangalore. Before going to bed we used to dwell on matters musical. Even as he got sleepy, his words would be "Iyyarval Enna, Yenna Sangitam, Yenna sangitam." and harp on those words as if he was enjoying within himself the marvellous music of Tyagaraja's krithis. Never have I heard Maharajapuram or Ariyakkudi refer to Saint Tyagaraja except as 'Iyyarval' or 'Tyagabrahmam'

Maharajapuram showed his instinctive grasp of Tyagaraja's musical genius in his renderings of the latter's krithis. He belonged to that genre of great masters who could on occasion afford to dispense with the prelude of raga alapana, as they could introduce the shimmering beauties of any raga in the rendering of the sangathis and in the neraval. He would seem to fondle the lyrics with lavish musical caresses. Who does not remember his 'Undedi Ramudokadu' in Harikamboji and the wonderful sangathis mounted on 'chanda marthanda madhya', making Harikamboji dance with abandon! Another thrilling experience was the memorable Ragamalika sloka from Srimad Bhagavatha 'Sruthwa Gunaan Bhuvana Sundara Srunvaihanthe'. He would roll each word on his tongue with delicacy and utter relish and dip them in the nectar of each raga in the ragamalike.

Once he said that each Raga Devatha is like a 'Moola Vighraha' (original idol) which could be encountered differently on different evenings to the utter delight of the devotees. to bring out different facets of that raga. Our great composers did

this in different krithis with different 'eduppus' and 'talas' and even the kalapramanas (tempo), in the same raga. This is probably the reason why great singers of the past generation preferred to concentrate on more krithis in some rakti ragas than on more songs in many ragas.

Maharajapuram's voice was something unique. A fine tribute to it came from Palghat Mani Iyer during a concert in Bangalore. Sometime after the concert started, Maharajapuram turned towards the Tanpoora to ensure that the Sruthi alignment was in order. Pat came Mani Iyer's remark "Ayyarval, Why do you bother about your voice. Ask the Tanpoora player to adjust the instrument to your sruthi. Your sruthi is infallible. On a number of occasions, G. N. B. has publicly acknowledged Ariyakkudi and Maharajapuram as two of his 'Manasika Gurus'.

Another great musician fan of Maharajapuram was Vidwan Ramanathapuram Krishnan. His approach to music and musical rendering was akin to that of Maharajapuram. He demonstrated this during one of his visits to Bangalore for a concert when he stayed with me as my guest. He sang a krithi in Mohanam, 'ala' Maharajapuram with that compelling voice inflection and contrasted it with the way it would be sung by other musicians with an indelicate use of the voice. He brought out vividly the difference in musical experience. It made me a fan of Krishnan also. Neither Maharajapuram nor Krishnan was a mass spell-binder as their music was on a higher plane. Both sang with relish for their own

edification. Their appeal was for a seasoned rasika capable of following and appreciating their thought processes.

Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer's name will go down in the musical history of this century as one of the two stalwarts who influenced their own generation and the next; the other being of course Ariyakkudi. During one of my visits to Madras I called on him at his residence. Once, something made me ask Viswanatha Iyer about the music of Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, his senior contemporary. The veteran waxed eloquent about Konerirajapuram and said: 'After completing my training under Umayalpuram

Swaminatha Iyer, I began giving concerts, without ever having assisted my Guru at his concerts. At that time Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyerval had made a redoubtable name. As a junior I attended his concerts sitting at a distance as behoved juniors. After listening to his glorious voice and technique, I wondered at my temerity in daring to become a concert artiste when such Titans were alive".

Those who notice a decline in Carnatic music would do well to remember that our music did not begin or end with either Purandaradasa or Tyagaraja. The God who created both these greats will fulfil himself in every age.

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Cultural Scene in Karnataka

By

T. B. NARASIMHACHAR

Throughout the quarter Dec-Feby, Karnataka has been aglow with cultural activities at State and private levels, due to the preoccupation with the much talked about 'Viswa Kannada Sammelan' and the Birth centenary of Saint Purandaradasa'. Of course the Tyagaraja Aradhana celebrations added to the number. In the process, the Department of Kannada and Culture, with its associate, the State Sangita Nritya Academy, was very active in arranging programmes on a grand scale, first at Mysore and then at each taluk headquarters, in keeping with the current drive on the part of the state government to take culture to the grass root level throughout the State. This included classical Hindusthani and Carnatic music, Harikatha, light music, and dance (mostly Bharathanatyam) - all by State artistes. This provided an opportunity and patronage to most performing artistes, irrespective of their reputation.

The first week of January saw the Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat (the forum for, of and by the musicians of Karnataka) hold its annual conference (16th year) and music festival at Shimoga, the Headquarters of the district of that name. It included a photographic exhibition of more than 350 photos of the leading artistes of the state—past and present. The Develop-

ment Centre of the Govt. of India provided an exhibition of rare and familiar musical instruments under the guidance of Vidwan T. Lokanatha Sharma. The conference was presided over by Vidwan M. Cheluvayaswami of Mysore, an eminent musician and musicologist. In his presidential address he emphasised that traditional teaching from Masters was necessary for attaining musicianship.

Academic sessions in the mornings drew a sizeable audience. Gunda Jois read out a paper on 'Patronage of Keladi royalty to Music and dance'. An illustrated talk by Dr. S. Ramanathan on '22 Sruthis', Lokanatha Sharma's talk on the 'importance of texts in presenting musical compositions' were well received. Dr. V. Doreswami Iyengar gave an illustrated talk on Mysore 'Thanam' traditions; H. B. Ramachar, well-known percussionist, gave a lecture demonstration on the history and art of playing the 'Kanjari'. Mysore V. Subrahmanya, a descendant of Veena Seshanna, spoke about some compositions of his ancestor and presented them through two vocalists-Ratna Shivashankar and Pankaja Simha. The conference president, with the help of his son vainika C. Krishnamurthi, presented some compositions of his Guru Veena Venkatagiriappa.

The symposium on 'Pallavi', initiated by the Parishat Secretary, - percussionist Bangalore K. Venkataram, brought out the evolution of pallavis and its place in contemporary concert stage. Many vidwans presented different types of pallavis. Expectedly enough, there was a symposium on 'Purandara Dasa, compared by B. V. K. Sastri. Tirumale sisters rendered some rare 'Suladis' in 'Salaga Nata.' Adya Ramacharya established the birthplace of Purandaradasa, as being in the Shimoga district of the erstwhile state of Mysore, adding some proof therefor. Prof. M. Rajagopalachar traced the evolution of some ragas through the compositions of Purandaradasa. B. M. Sundaram of A.I.R., Pondicherry, read an interesting paper on the influence of Purandaradasa in Tamil Nadu and the interest evinced by the Tanjore Rulers in Dasa's works. Ratna Shivashanker gave an illustrated talk on Kannada 'Ughabhogas' of Haridasas. Smt. Kannamma Sharma from Canada played Tyagaraja's Utsava Sampradaya krithis.

Under the leadership of the conference president, there was a workshop on 'Geethas' - a form of musical composition, in which 32 musicians and observers participated. There was a study circle for rare compositions under the guidance of Dr. S. Ramanathan, in which rare ragas like Devaranji, Kalavathi and Jyothiswaroopini figured. 'Namaste Paradevathe' in Devaranji was presented on the concluding day. About 50 artistes figured in the evening music festival. Apart from conferring the title of 'Gana Kala Bhushana' on the President of the conference, Sri M. Cheluvaryaswami, Prasamapatras' (felicitatory citations)

were also presented to T. V. Jayasimhadasa (Harikatha), M. Prabhakar (Sugam Sangit), B. M. Shivappa (blind vocalist) and Leela Ramanathan (Bharathanatyam). Much of the success of the conference was due to the unstinted co-operation extended by Sri I. M. Vittalamurthi, Deputy Commissioner and the Municipal authorities. The Parishat has been trying to bring about unity and understanding amongst the musicians of this state through monthly Seminars, get-togethers, lecture-demonstrations, and the annual conference, on a common platform to air their views and work for their common weal.

Accent on Percussion art

The Palghat Mani Iyer Memorial Centre's objectives are sought to be realised through a newly established registered body called the percussive Arts Centre, the guiding spirit being again Bangalore K. Venkataraman. The Centre arranged a series of solos and Pallavi recitals during February in which some leading local artistes participated,

Academy Awards

The annual Awards function of the State Sangita Nritya Academy was noteworthy for the fact that the awards were presented to the recipients, not by any gubernational authority but by eminent personalities of the literary and art world like Dr. Pu. Thi. Narasimhachar, Dr. Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar, Dr. Stanislas Roerich (artist) and Smt. B. Jayamma (Stage artist). Eight awardees represented Carnatic classical (vocal and instrumental), Hindusthani classical (vocal and instrumental), Sugam Sangit Bharathanatyam,

Harikatha and Art Criticism. For the first time, eight prizes (cash) were awarded to eight writers of books on music and dance in Kannada during the past decade. This scheme is proposed to be continued in the coming years in order to encourage the publication of more books on the subjects.

Dance festival

The Karnataka Nritya Kala Parishat held a five-day dance festival (VI year). It consisted of 'open house' discussion on dance teaching techniques adopted by various teachers, discussion on *Dance criterion* amongst dancers, dance teachers and dance critics, discussion on how classical dances of India could be used to express contemporary themes, discussion on musical collaboration with dance (vocal support,) mridangam support, Nattuvangam support and instrumental support. Of course dance dramas were presented in the evening by various local troupes, some of the titles being 'Nawab Nandini' 'Chitrangada' and 'Kalidasa Kavya Darsana'

Purandara Festival

Just on the lines of the hurriedly got-up Viswa-Kannada Sammelana, the Department of Kannada and Culture repr-

esenting the relative Ministry, arranged at short notice a grand celebration of the birth centenary celebration of Saint Purandaradasa. The occasion marked the publication of a four-volume 'PURANDARA SAHITYA DARSHANA' of course in Kannada, and priced reasonably at Rs. 65/-. Singing of exclusively Purandaradasa's compositions (padas) by local artistes marked the celebrations but Dr. M. S. Subbulakshmi and Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna drew packed houses establishing the fact that loyalty to Purandaradasa alone will not attract crowds but singers with marquee reputation are needed.

The Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan (Bangalore Kendra) is quite active in arranging a series of lectures, concerts, lecture-demonstrations on chosen subjects by competent speakers/artistes, etc., the object being not mere entertainment but education. In addition to the Every Friday Evening Cultural Programmes of music and Dance being arranged by the I.C.C.R. and the Youth Writers and Artistes Guild on Every Monday, Weekly Art exhibition, is also being held at the Art Complex of the Chitrakala Parishat to give a boost to young artistes.

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Tansen Festival at Delhi

By

SAKUNTALA NARASIMHAN

Tansen, described as "the greatest musician of this millennium", a "many-splendoured genius and an originator of many musical modes - a fountain from which the various gharanas of Hindustani music flowed", was one of the legendary and pre-eminent 'nine jewels' of Emperor Akbar's court. Born in a village near Gwalior, he came under the influence of Swami Haridas of Brindaban who initiated him into music. Legend has it that he was a Hindu, named Ramtanu Pande (or Misra, according to one version) but married a Muslim girl, and was attached to the court of Raja Mansingh Tomar of Gwalior before he moved to Akbar's court and received the title of 'Tansen'.

Stories about 'Sangeet Samrat' Tansen abound, the most famous of them being the one claiming that he was able to set lamps alight by singing Raga Deepak. Popular Hindustani ragas like Mian-ki-Malhar, Mian-ki-Todi and Darbari are said to be the creations of Tansen.

480th Anniversary

Just as south Indian musicians congregate at Thyagaraja's samadhi at Tiruvaiyaru every year during the saint's death anniversary, north Indian musicians gather at Gwalior where Tansen is buried, for an annual Tansen Samaroh, and pay musical homage to him.

The 480th birth anniversary of Mian Tansen was celebrated in Delhi recently

with a four-day festival of dance and music organised by the National Cultural Organisation, from 29th January. It was noteworthy on two counts—for one, it has been organised for the last 35 years by a south Indian resident of the capital, Dr. N. P. Seshadri; for another, Ustad Bismillah Khan has honoured the organisation by giving the inaugural concert every single year.

For the septuragenarian Ustad, this particular annual recital has come to have almost a sentimental importance, and at this year's concert on January 29, 1986, he not only played shehnai for 3 hours but also broke into song, to the delight of the audience which clamoured for more.

Earlier Union Minister Vasant Sathe had inaugurated the festival and Ustad Bismillah Khan had garlanded a portrait of Tansen.

Tansen was a dhrupad singer, and the second day's fare included, appropriately, a recital by the Dagar brothers who are among the very few custodians of the dhrupad style today. The bharatanatyam recital by Sushila Duraiswamy which followed featured abhinaya for a Tansen composition 'Bijure chamake'.

The third day's programme offered a sarod recital by Ustad Rehmat Ali Khan, the elder son of Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, and

a kathak recital by dancer Uma Sharma to the accompaniment of the popular Pt. Shanta Prasad on the tabla. The festival concluded with a jugalbandi offering by flutist Amarnath and violinist Dinesh Prabhakar (whose father had performed at the same Tansen festival exactly 25 years earlier) and a dance recital by Komala Varadan.

"In music, we have the nearest approach to universal language," says the organiser, Dr. Seshadri. "Melody is the soul of music, and Tansen is the soul of melody; in his immortal outpourings Tansen, more than anyone else, underlined and epitomised the synthesis and efflorescence of the noblest and the best in the Hindu and Muslim cultures. It is because of this that we consider Tansen even

greater than Akbar. "It is thus that, even being a very devout and staunch advocate of South Indian culture and traditions, he sees the Tansen festival which he organises every year gratis, as a contribution to national integration, communal harmony and a means of highlighting our unity in diversity through cultural programmes. He is also one of our seniormost administrators, having been in charge of handlooms development and tea promotion in Sydney before taking up his current assignment as chief of the Steel Authority of India. (SAIL).

It remains to be seen whether some north Indian music enthusiast will come up to match this spirit and enthusiasm with a sammelan dedicated to Thyagaraja! Why not?

24-Hours non-stop vocal concert at Vijayawada

Another musical yagna of Marathon proportions has taken place. K. Seshadri*, Lecturer in Government Music College, Vijayawada, with the help of ten violin Vidwans and Ten Mridanga Vidwans, undertook this Yagna and successfully completed, at Sivarama Krishna Kestram Vijayawada on 21st February 86. Seshadri sang only Tyagaraja Kritis, without swara kalpana and without any break in the twenty-four hours. Starting his programme with 'SRIGANAPATHINI' in Saurastham, followed it up with 'Guruleka Etuvanti' and the great Pancharatna kritis. Altogether, Seshadri rendered 202 (Two hundred and two) kritis in 140

Ragas. He rendered brief alapana for nearly 15 ragas and did neraval for the Kritis in those ragas.

A good sized audience was present to witness the function. At its conclusion, the Secretary of the temple, the Government Music college people and other Associations and individuals present congratulated Seshadri and presented gifts. In the felicitation function, Sri M. Radha Krishna Raju, C. Raghavachary, P. S. Ghotlkar and K. S. Prakasa Rao commended the efforts and repertoire of Seshadri and blessed him.

Cultural Roundabout

BY

SULOCHANA RAJENDRAN

BOMBAY

That music unites the world is quite well known and we had at the Shanmukhananda Hall on R-Day-eve music uniting India that is Bharat-uttara and dakshina. The programme "National Integration Through Music" was one that brought together maestros of both Hindustani and Karnatak systems to perform and perceive an integrated musical expression, which the Maharashtra Governor Kona Prabhakar Rao believed "would illuminate our common heritage across the length and breadth of our country and thus, by making people aware of it, would promote national solidarity."

Grand Vision

The programme, as such, was but a venture on a grand scale what the late Pandit S.N. Ratanjankar had already attempted way back in the fifties. He advocated a blend of the analytical treatment and expression of music in Carnatic system with the synthetic treatment and expression of music in Hindustani system so that an All India National System could be evolved. In fact, he had introduced some Varnams of the Carnatic system into Hindustani music (those in Hamsadhvani, Kalyani, Kedargowla and Mohanam) replacing the original sahitya in Telugu with Sanskrit and also composed Varnams in

Hindustani ragas such as Marwa, Todi, Bhairava and Kapi. That "Vathapi Ganapathim" had a parallel composition in Hindi composed by Ustad Aman Ali Khan, is all too well known. Experiments of musicians from both the systems performing select compositions and expounding them in their respective systems too were conducted. All that Ratanjankar strove for, perhaps, remained at the laboratory stage.

Jugalbandhi

The instrumental jugalbandhi of the North-South musicians which has been on the anvil for sometime now is not new either. The concept of jugalbandhi or duet (its near synonym) has been there in both the systems since the 'concert' days. May be its ambit was limited to sishyas of the same guru of co-gharanaists. Whilst dueting of different gharanas or bani in the north made good progress, the pairing of different instruments (sitar and sarod) but of the same school added a new dimension to it. A variation of this was the Yugal Sangeet which paired vocalists and instrumentalists of different schools, organised by the Sur Singar Samsad..

To the extent this pairing was melody-based the experiment invariably succeeded when artistes, both of equal creative calibre and expressive felicity, perceived its true

*Master's in music (Mysore University) (Diplomas in both violin and music (Andhra University) (Disciple of Violinist M. Chandrasekharan) A.I.R. artist.

objective. However, this writer has often wondered how it would turn out when extended to vocal sessions where sahitya figured. And without reservations, it could be admitted that the vocal jugalbandhi at the "integration meet" turned out to be an experience that would be cherished for long. The two 'giants', Pt. Bhimsen Joshi and Dr. Balamuralikrishna with their powerful vocalism and range got into the spirit of the occasion and their structuring of ragas, Yaman and Kalyani, was eloquent.

The initial tendency of Pt. Bhimsen to dominate with open throated build-up and frequent interruptions was mollified by Balamurali's subtle artistry and a step-up in akaara prayogas with fine textured filigrees. The lyrical line, "Sangeetame Mansukha-daayi, Sarigamapadani Saptaswara" gyrated imaginatively through the gamut of technique in both the systems, through alapa phases, akaar bols, swaraprastharas reproduced in bol taans, meends and octaval darts. Their darts and dovetailing, delivery and dialogue, truly made it an integrated form. The Hindolam-Malkauns Tillana/Tarana fare was a treat, with its sizzling solkattus in varying tempo coming off with crisp clarity.

To the rasikas who have kept track of Lalgudi-Amjad Ali violin-sarod Jugalbandhi, this instrumental pair did not measure up to the expected high. The silken sheen and touch so unique for the violin vidwan was not much in evidence. At times, 'textural roughness' and 'coarse coaxing' peeped in. The sarod ustad played the gamakas low and stepped on to plain note-phrasings. Their combined effort at Simhendramadhyamam was certainly not their best. Though their

cross dialogue with percussionists, Vellore Ramabadrans (mridangam) and Shafat Ahmad (tabla) evoked some inspiration, the percussion Thani lacked lilt and crisp improvisation.

Tala Vadhya Disappointing

It was a pity that the strongest hold on this integration through music should have proved to be the weakest segment: the laya-front. The Tala vadya Kutcheri bringing together Yella Venkateswara Rao (mridangam), Ustad Alla Rakha (Tabla) Vinayakaram (ghatam) and Arjun Shejwal (pakhawaj) on Teen-Adi Tala rambled without direction or coordination. The mridangam lead left much to be desired. All said and done, the Jugalbandhi syndrome could, it seems, only be part of a variety entertainment and cannot become a separate classic entity. Asha Khadikar's invocation song was haunting but not so was Janaki's integration song.

Sangeet Nataka Academy Functions

Hardly a month after that, the Maharashtra government's cultural wing did it again—only this time the venue was shifted to the state owned Ravindra Natya Mandir which was given a hurried face-lift, for the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi annual awards presentation ceremony and the week-long festival of music, dance and drama that followed. The additional dimension, the directorate of cultural affairs, provided for the occasion were two exhibitions, one on the Indian tradition of performing arts with special emphasis on Maharashtra and the other displaying the photographs of SNA awardees of yesteryears.

Awards

The presentation of the awards for 1985 by the Vice-President, R. Venkataraman was as usual a grand affair and twenty awardees who were each honoured with a tamra patra and cash of Rs. 10,000 represented performing arts ranging from highly classical to the simple folk art (Ladakhi music) in music and dance. More besides acknowledging ritual temple music ('sopana sangeetam' of Kerala) the Akademi extended its patronage to the wings too, i.e., to a playwright, drama director and sets designer.

Speaking from the soil of Maharashtra, the Vice president rightly touched upon the links the Mahratta rulers had made with Thanjavur where, it is said, even mute stones resonate to music. The week-long performances by the awardees opened with Bombay-based Kishori Amonkar's Hindustani vocal. Her Rageshree was a mode that could be appreciated by the cosmopolitan audience as it had its roots in the south too.

Of the others, Valangaiman Shanmukhasundaram, the Thavil samrat and the only thavil artiste to be so honoured, easily stole the show with an 'environment of rhythm', starting up with simple jathis and phasing through intricate build-up based on the occasion for which the thavil accompaniment was used. Another artiste to exhibit immense enduring musical quality and breath control was the septuagenarian Shahnai player, Ali Hussain Khan. His approach to music and its expression had an elegant softness and Puriya Kalyan and Narayani glistened in all their placidity. If Nasir Aminuddin Dagar was a bit too disturbed on stage to make a convincing

presentation of the fast vanishing Dhrupad, Voleti Venkateswarulu made a calm enunciation of the Carnatic kritis and the scope they lend to beautiful improvisations, in his uninhibited fluent style.

Kuchipudi

On the one hand there was a typical earthy style of Kuchipudi presented by Vedantam Prahlada Sarma (elder brother of Satyanarayana Sarma) and his pupils, Venkatasitaram donning Bhama in 'Lekha' and Manikya Bharati doing the Tarangam. On the other, traditional Bharata Natyam in its Tanjore style was conducted by T. K. Mahalingam Pillai presenting his students, Sucharita and Vinata. Classical Odissi with a touch of modernity was presented by Mayadhar Raut and Madhumita. Quite light was the fare from Manipuri that Lokeshwar Singh conducted.

'Sopana sangeetam' by Rama Poduval evoked interest among some in the audience. By far the well-attended fare were the plays in Manipuri and in Bengali. Suchitra Mitra's Rabindra sangeet was noteworthy for the musical evocation she gave to Tagore's songs.

Balamani's Virtuosity

A studied solidity, firm laya command and technical and aesthetised improvisations marked the style of Smt. T. R. Balamani who is better known through her pupils who have bagged many first prizes in competitions in Bombay and elsewhere. Her music has an aura combining an innate rapport with musical science and art, so much so that the concert at the Shanmukhananda Sabha (March) was well acclaimed by connoisseurs and commoners.

Malayamarutham ("Padmanabha"), Khamas ("Nanda Gopalakrishna"), Bhairavi ("Enatinomu phalamo") and Kalyani RTP in 4-Kalai Triputa Tala were the highlights of a recital in which her daughter Ranjani Mani joined with natural ease. Ranjani's essay of Purvikalyani had fine aesthetic touches and vision.

A Promising Colt

O. S. Thiagarajan's musical lineage, his thorough grooming coupled with exten-

sive exposure to classics listening have paid rich dividends. His music casts an impact, both repertoire-wise and interpretatively. His "Ramanatham" (Pantavarali), "Manasu Swadhinamaina" (Sankara bharanam) bore the classical touch. Accompanying both the vocalists, Kumari Usha (violin) and K. V. Prasad (mridangam) showed their superior mettle. For so young an artiste, Usha impressed with her poised charm in alapanas and precise anticipation in accompanying.

BOOK REVIEW

'Folk music of Andhra Pradesh'— By Smt. Vinjamuri Sita Devi—published with financial assistance from the Central Sangit Natak Academy : Pp. 132 : price Rs. 60/-

Folk music has significantly been defined by one Western scholar as the musical repertoire of communities as opposed to the expression of the musically trained individual. Often the name of the composer is lost in antiquity. Against this definition, Smt. Sita Devi, hailing from a family of literateurs of Andhra Pradesh, has rendered signal service through her thesis in English for her M. Litt. degree, way back in 1951. In the context of the current patronage being extended to the study and practice of Folk Arts by the Central and the several State governments and the media even in urban areas, this book becomes valuable and significant.

In her thesis Sita Devi has rightly dilated on the importance of the study of folk music, its significance and range, covering the social events of every kind; its historical perspective; the raga identification with the musical aspect, such as to

inspire even Tyagaraja and Dikshitar, with a chapter on folk instruments to lend substance to her thesis. In addition to many excerpts from some/Telugu songs with notations there is also an Appendix containing selected songs (Roman script).

Being a daughter of the soil, who made extensive forays into the interior rural parts of Andhra, Sita Devi has invested her writing with a native insight and imagination so as to highlight the inbuilt flavour of the thinking of the Andhra people over the centuries in music and literature, through personal involvement with this folk idiom. Those interested in music will definitely stand to gain by a study of this book. Its format and get-up are excellent.

'SARAGRAHI'

OBITUARY

S. NATARAJAN

In the tragic death of S. Natarajan, our Kerala Correspondent and the dynamic Secretary of the Swati Tirunal Sangeetha Sabha of Trivandrum, the world of the performing arts has lost a supporter of Pharisaic zeal. Being a highly placed official of the Kerala Government did not deter him from engaging himself with a zeal and energy into giving life to cultural institutions and also into providing the utmost encouragement to rising artists, whether they are musicians, instrumentalists, or dancers. A key to both his success and popularity probably lay in the fact that he could form lasting friendships with similar knight errants in the world of art and widen the circle of both performers and aficionados (a word he was fond of using!). He was totally free from cynicism and from the stultifying negativism one often comes across among those in charge of public service institutions. "Shanmukha" does indeed miss an able and picturesque correspondent and Kerala a fine social worker. We regret his untimely demise.

Vidwan SALEM DESIKAN

Only those who had heard Salem Desikan in the early stages of his chequered career as a vocalist of intellectual stature will really have a due measure of the loss the world of classical music has suffered in his death at the age of 60. He was well known for his impressive repertoire both in kritis and pallavis—some with rare padanthara - that the mantle of a musician's musician fell on him without his being conscious of it. He was a laya Vidwan of no small stature—an article now in short supply. Ill-health dogged him over the years and forced him into retirement from the platform, though not from training many a talented youngster. Some of the front rank musicians of our time are indebted to him. No greater tribute to a scholar musician is needed. We extend our sincere condolences to the family of so sincere and versatile an artist. He was perhaps the last of that tribe of musicians which prized training, perfectionism and enlarging of musical horizons, above mere material success or popularity. KSM

WE WISH OUR READERS & WELL—WISHERS
A HAPPY TAMIL NEW YEAR

The late Al. Ar. CHOKKIAH CHETTIAR

DISCERNING PATRON OF MUSIC AND BHARATA NATYA

By

N. R. BHUVARAHAN

Little did I know that Al. Ar. Chokkiah Chettiar of Devakottah, would succumb to the injuries sustained by him owing to a fall at Devakottah, on 20th February 1986. Prior to his departure, he visited me and gave the customary silk packet of Vibudhi (sacred ash) of Sri Ramanathaswami Devasthanam, Rameswaram, of which he was the hereditary trustee. The parting words were: I celebrated my 75th birthday with my friends and relatives by performing Koti archana to Ramanathaswami, our tutelary deity. Here is the "prasadam". I have two dance classics to give you along with the nattuvanar's, cymbals. They are: "Sabha Ranjitha Chintamani" and "Natanadi Vadyar Ranjanam". The two books and the cymbals, were his most treasured possessions he always carried in a small cloth hand bag.

In the art world (dance and music) of changing values, he was a staunch adherent of the classical tradition. He could count among his bosom friends some of the top persons in the world of music and dance for over five decades from the thirties onwards. Veenabashini of Tanjore, Banumathi and Varalakshmi of Kumbakonam, Pattu and Saranayaki, Gowri and Balasaraswathi, Pandanallur

Jayalakshmi and Lakshmirajam, Nirmala Ramachandran, besides Kamala, Vijayanthi, E. V. Saroja, L. Vijayalakshmi, Hemamalini (C. K. Vijayaragavan's daughter) and Alarmel Valli (today's torch-bearer of the Pandanallur school of Natya) received unstinted help at the hands of this enlightened zamindar of Devakottah.

There was not one distinguished musician or dancer (great or small) who has not sung or danced at the marriage festivities of this hospitable house, which were five day celebrations. Of the innumerable musicians, I can recall his close intimacy with Ariyakudi, Maharajapuram, Musiri, Chembai, Rajamanikkam, Papa Venkatarama Aiyar and Palghat Mani Aiyar and Smt. M. S. Subbulakshmi, D. K. Pattammal, and M. L. Vasanthakumari. He was equally receptive to the young entrants and of the many musicians he helped to come up were Mani Krishnaswami, N. C. Soundaravalli, Alangramam Ramachandran, K. V. Narayanaswami, Nirmala Soundararajan, Alagiriswami (violin), R. Mani (violin) and Thanjavur Ramamurthi (Mridangam). His advice on music and dance was always sought after by the late K. Srinivasan and G. Narasimhan of "The Hindu". He was held in great esteem and respect by the music loving public.

For a few years, he set up a music and dance centre under the name of "Karnataka Sanga", in a small building at the Luz corner. Here I met the stalwarts of the music and the dance world. To name a few, Rajamanikkam playing violin with Ganapathia Pillai, or Gowri teaching abhinaya for Kamalini Thyagarajan and the late Pushpa.

He swore by the music of Ariyakudi and the abhinaya of Balasaraswathi, always underlining the classical varnas in dance by the Tanjore Quartette.

Even while walking, he used to mumble the swaras or sollukattus of the famous Varnam "Danike" in Todi or the jatiswaram in Kalyani, "Sarasijakshi". How often have I heard the swara refrain:

"Papa Da, pa da da, ni ni ni, sa sa sa, sari ri ri ga ga, sari sa ni da da ni". The passage is unexcelled in this brilliant choreography of the Pandanallur school with its slight jumps and crescendo of circular movements. It was a delectable feast for the eyes as well as the ears as one watched Jayalakshmi execute it to the nattuvangam of the great Chokkalingam Pillai at the Museum Theatre, Egmore.

Of the pick of the Nattuvanars, he was very friendly with Sikki Ramaswami Pillai, Tiruvalaputhur Swaminatha Pillai, Madras Thiruvengadam, Madurai Rathnam, Thanjavur Arunachalam, Kancheepuram Ellappa and Chokkalingam, Subbaroyan and Tiruchendur Meenakshisundaram Pillai. Having learnt some early lessons on the violin under the great Mysore



Sri Chokkiah in the company of Papanasam Sivam, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Venkatakrishnan, Flute Venkatarama Iyer

Photo : Courtesy Sri Bhuvaram

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TAMIL NADU

Chowdiah, he quietly practised on it in his house. He was primarily responsible for putting Kandadevi Alagiriswami under Chowdiah and hitching him on to Ariyakudi for a concert at Devakottah when he was barely 12. Likewise, he took Palghat K. V. Narayanaswami to Ramanuja Iyengar pressing him to take him under his wings, when the music student from Palghat decided to go to Gandhi Ashram in Wardha due to some misunderstanding. The late Kandadevi Seema (Mridangam and Kanjiri) became Palghat Mani Aiyar's pupil. through the good offices of Chokkiah Chettiar.

Deeply religious by training and temperament, Chokkiah was a princely host, a warm friend and a discriminating promoter of classical music and natya. His passing away is a grievous loss to the art world. He is survived by three sons (of whom two are in the banking service) and a daughter in Madras. May his soul rest in peace.

Shobana Rangachari

Young Shobana Rangachari lost her life in a fire accident recently. By temperament, she was a stimulating

chamber musician; her style of singing was developed more for self-enquiry and exploration of the depths of Carnatic music. It was music of an antique temper. Her programmes made no concession to box-office appeal. They were far away from the well-worn repertoires of the concert hall of today. Who today begins a recital with Pallavi Gopala Iyer's Ata thala varnam, the classic "Kanakangi"? But Shobana often did and enjoyed it. The discerning listener could never fail to notice her intensity of expression and ease of execution when she took up a Sahana raga or Devagandhari or Begada or Madhyamavathi and followed it up with a classic Kriti in a Vilambakala that reminded us of M. D. Ramanathan—in fact there were many things in common between them, especially in outlook. Both believed in condensation. Her music was moving and vivid in strictly musical terms. Basically Shobana's technique was self acquired. Alas! she could move a Sem-mangudi with her rounded, darting musical phrasings of maturity but not the average concert-goer. An interesting career cut off tragically by fate. The enlightened will bemoan her demise.

KSM

Edited by K. S. Mahadevan, Printed and Published by R. V. Murthy for Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha, Bombay-400 022. Printed at Rajan & Co. Printers, 1, Goomes Street, Madras - 600 001. Registered with Registrar of Newspapers for India No. R. N. 27938/75.

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Dr. V. Subramanian, President of the Sabha and his Colleagues, receive Shri Konakar Prabhakar Rao at the Sabha